

# *Secret and Confidential*

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**“SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL”**





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THE AUTHOR WITH THE EMPEROR OF RUSSIA  
September 1916  
(From a Snapshot)

*[Frontispiece]*

# "SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL"

THE EXPERIENCES OF A MILITARY ATTACHÉ

BY BRIG.-GENERAL W. H-H. WATERS  
C.M.G., C.V.O.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is necessary to explain the somewhat startling title : the book covers a period of a little over forty years, and various names were thought of ; they all seemed flaccid, so, in despair, I consulted Mr. Murray, who at once suggested " Secret and Confidential " as being the usual official expression, and the best summing-up of a military attaché's work. It is not, of course, employed in any way to denote indiscretion, but simply because the passage of time makes it not only possible but even, from an historical standpoint, advisable to make public what was once private.

A novice in literature, like myself, must feel very diffident about braving the reading public, but two writers of distinction, one English and the other American, have urged me on. My next anxiety was : could sufficient matter of real interest for a volume be found ? My doubts on this point were soon solved, and the result has actually been cutting out rather than adding on. My greatest teacher, the late Sir Robert Morier, told me once that my speech was better than my writing. As it took me several days to explain a very simple thing to His Excellency, it follows that his opinion of my pen work was not a very high one ! But he persevered and, it is to be hoped, effected some improvement.

Some idea of the contents of this book is therefore indispensable. Russia has been described by so many writers that it is a venturesome act to add to their number, but new matter, hitherto unknown to the world at large, will, it is hoped, justify the deed. The volume does not, however, deal exclusively with that extraordinary and wonderful land.

Receiving a substantial sum to exchange to India in

1884, I passed thence into the Staff College, so was home again in a twelvemonth. Taking up Russian, a visit to Muscovy brought me accidentally into contact with Sir Robert Morier, who afterwards "defeated the whole British Army"—to quote Lord Rosebery, then Foreign Secretary—and got me appointed military attaché.

Hence it resulted that I was the first British Military Attaché to be permitted to visit Russian Turkestan, in 1894, at a critical time ; the nerves of the Government of India were on edge, while, to my mind, there was no good reason for this anxiety. War between England and Russia was in sight, in 1898, when the latter seized Port Arthur, and the Emperor wished to discuss the matter with me instead of with the ambassador, Sir Nicholas O'Connor.

After St. Petersburg, a second tour in the Intelligence Division of the War Office, in 1898, was followed by a brief spell in South Africa, whence the military attachéship at Berlin, during the Boer War, fell to my lot, just at the most interesting time. Space has prevented me from writing almost a volume on my experiences there, but the German Emperor's threat of intervention is quoted, also his wishes regarding Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. William II told me that England had become degenerate through luxury. I replied that he did not understand my countrymen, who would fight to the death for a *cause*, adding that "deeds of heroism are performed daily in Britain by miners, shop-assistants, children and others, which are taken as a matter of course with us, but, in a continental country, would be rewarded by the highest honours."

Some of the dispensers of military patronage in London had a poor opinion, in those days, of military attachés, and looked upon them as belonging to the idle rich, so I retired after Berlin, in 1904, just at the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. Owing to circumstances, in which I had no share whatever, my resignation was cancelled, and I was reinstated, to become the War Office representative with the Russian army in Manchuria. This was the first case of its kind since the Crimean War, and caused bitter resentment, in some quarters, against me, an

innocent lamb. How the same hand, which wrote in the most complimentary terms about my work in Manchuria, exploded a mine behind my back is quoted, also the successful effort of one in high authority at the Foreign Office to prevent my name being included in the Honours List for that campaign. In themselves these things are of no general interest whatever, and are mentioned only because they throw light upon the wheels within wheels of official life.

After Manchuria the command of our troops of occupation in North China was given to me by the unanimous vote of the Selection Board. My experiences there were most interesting, but there is not room to state them at length. In the early part of the volume is mentioned a pinprick given by the acting Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and to this I have appended an account of an extraordinarily astute thrust at diplomacy by the Dowager Empress of China, when she caused me to be specially honoured to the discomfiture of certain Foreign Ministers. Later on, the fact is mentioned that the question of extra-territoriality was exercising the minds of the Chinese a score of years ago, and is not a post-war growth.

Returning from China in 1910, I retired for the second time, and was idle, in a military sense, until the Great War came. My experiences then in that unhappy muddle, the Press Bureau, and others with newly raised troops at home were, to me, illuminating.

These were followed, in 1916, by Fortune being again wreathed in smiles. It had been my luck—or, as I maintain, of course—my admirable judgment of character which had caused me, soon before the Boer War, to get Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson—then a captain—appointed to the War Office, and I had had much difficulty in preventing his transfer to a minor provincial post. In 1916 he sent me to the Emperor of Russia; my former relations with that monarch and his Consort are described in this book, and I really think I may claim that nobody knew them better than I did, and few so well. My time at Mogilov was the most interesting of my life; when I came to England for His Majesty, in the autumn of 1916,



he wrote a letter pressing for my early return, and so did Alexyeev, his Chief of the Staff.

These requests were brushed aside owing to hostile influence in the Foreign Office. I regretted this, specially as I was peculiarly anxious to warn the Emperor of the mad policy of his Minister, Protopopov, with whom I had had a heart-to-heart talk after the Emperor had gone out, on the day of my departure from Mogilov. If I could have seen His Majesty, food for the towns could easily have been arranged without Protopopov losing face, and the tragedy might possibly have been averted, at any rate during the war. It is shown that Nicholas II was a far better judge of the character of his subjects than were many of his ministers, and his prophecy as to what would happen to the moderate revolutionaries, in the event of an upheaval, was borne out to the day.

In commenting on the terrible catastrophe in Russia my object has been to show that no Autocrat could have prevented its occurrence at some not distant date, for the training of the influential people prevented them from helping the monarch. The magnificent behaviour of St. Petersburg society amid all its awful sufferings is an example to the whole world. Every society has its faults, but this does not—or should not—prevent even critics from cherishing the greatest affection for individuals and their countries.

Without our aid our European Allies would soon have been under the German heel to remain there, so it is only right to mention the extraordinary skill with which Mr. McKenna handled our finances, while it was most interesting to observe the hungry look of some foreign representatives, when they came to him for money.

W. H-H. WATERS.

MAY 1926.

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THE AUTHOR WITH THE EMPEROR OF RUSSIA  
SEPTEMBER 1916

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# “SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL”

## CHAPTER I

It sounds odd, but scarcity of cash proves sometimes to be a blessing in disguise. I was a subaltern in the Royal Horse Artillery at Exeter when promoted in the year 1884, just at the time that the Gordon Relief Expedition was being prepared. In those days the principal authorities at the War Office were very accessible to junior officers, whereas, I am told, it would now be easier for the camel to get through the needle's eye than for a fairly senior officer to penetrate through the door of a quite junior subordinate there. After having been struck off the strength at Exeter, a delightful station, I interviewed General Sir Robert Hay, in whose hands lay the fortunes of artillery officers ; he was the Deputy Adjutant-General for our arm, and I asked him whether, instead of joining my new battery at Shoeburyness, he would allow me to go to Egypt if Lord Wolseley would take me.

“ Well,” he replied, “ why on earth do you fellows all want to go on service ? Look at me ; I have been nowhere since the Crimean War, and yet I have not done badly. However, I have no objection, but am quite sure that you have not the slightest chance of being taken.”

I thanked him warmly, and skipped downstairs to interview Mr. Sills, Private Secretary to the Adjutant-General of the Army, Lord Wolseley. He said at once that Hay was right ; the whole British Army was clamouring to go out, and all vacancies were already filled. This had been expected by me, so I then brought up my reserves, and handed him a letter of introduction to his lordship, which he took in to him. Presently he returned and said luck was in my way ; Lord Wolseley had sent for

Hay to ask whether he had any objection to my release, so I looked upon the matter as good as settled. There was, however, a slip between the cup and the lip: the Adjutant-General's bell rang, Sills went to answer it, and came back with the intimation that General Hay had said I could not be spared!

My feelings may be imagined; I dashed upstairs and into his room with a bitter complaint that he had played me false; it occurred to me at the time that, had I been in the position of the Deputy Adjutant-General, something very unpleasant would have happened. Instead of scarifying me, he pointed out that my new battery had no major and that a captain was badly wanted, but my point was that he had raised no objection in the first instance. To this he replied that he had not thought, for a moment, that there was any possibility of a place being found for me with the expedition, and, as I continued to nurse my grievance about his broken promise, he said, at last, that I had better leave the room and join my battery!

Feeling very sour indeed, I wended my way to a Mr. Tull, one of the army exchange agents of those days, who arranged exchanges between officers, taking a moderate commission on any sums which passed. I told him that I wanted to go to India in return for a passage and £300. He burst out laughing, explaining that, as regards money, at any rate, the procedure would have to be reversed, as everybody happened to be desirous of going to the East. Eventually he said he would let me know if he could meet me, so I got ten days' leave of absence and awaited the result. Two days before my holiday was to end he sent a telegram telling me that a captain had just cabled from India for an exchange home at any cost.

I then mapped out my plan of campaign, which consisted in joining at Secunderabad, and being examined there for admission to the Staff College at Camberley, which would result—if my scheme should work out according to plan—in my being ordered home again in twelve months' time. Everything happened as projected, and I joined the seat

of learning at the commencement of the year 1886, for the two years' course. Incidentally, this brought the Staff College more into favour with artillery officers: at that time not more than three of us were admitted annually, although it always happened that several artillerymen gained higher places in the entrance examination than did officers of cavalry or infantry who were admitted. The idea was to prevent a large number of so-called scientific officers from becoming prospective staff officers: in continental armies the system was different. When it was known that I had been successful, there began, and continues to this day, a rush of artillery candidates for admission, on the very plausible theory that, if I could get in, anybody could. In a sense, therefore, I may claim to have done some good for the brains of the army, which is, I believe, the correct term to employ nowadays.

Three hundred pounds, however, could not last for ever, and, after graduating at the Staff College, at the end of the year 1887, with leave of absence until the following April, it was patent that scarcity of cash would prevent my holiday being spent partly in hunting, which had been my favourite sport since childhood. This unfortunate state of affairs had, however, been foreseen for some time previously, with the result that I had taken up the study of the Russian language, with the intention of becoming acquainted with the land of the Czars. It may be remarked, parenthetically, that its sovereign, in his own country, was always written to and spoken of as the Emperor, but this little fact does not yet seem to have been grasped by many of the horde of experts—efficient or inefficient—who overran Russia for many years.

Russia had been our bogey for a long time before I joined the Staff College at the commencement of the year 1886; all sorts of Machiavellian schemes were imputed to the rulers of that unhappy country and their Ministers, the main object of which was stated to be the discomfiture of the British Empire; hearty pulls were to be given to the lion's tail if, indeed, it could not be wrenched off altogether. There was, no doubt, some foundation for these reports, for English and Russian interests were apt

to clash at times, not only in Asia but in other parts of the world as well. Generally speaking those officers, who happened to be military students, were imbued with the idea that Russia was a dangerous potential enemy; this was natural enough, seeing that politicians and Press alike fostered the thought. She had unparalleled manpower, and an immense number of troops always under arms; she was close at hand to her nearest objectives, while we, with our trifling actual resources, were a long distance away from them. Furthermore, Asiatic Russia was closed to British travellers, so that we were very much in the dark regarding what appeared to be a real danger.

One important factor had, perforce, to be left out of account, because it was not known, namely, the temperament of the Russian people: its white section comprises several different races which have always had one characteristic in common; this was, of course, known to the numerous English merchants who traded in Russia, but, in days gone by, they were not consulted as a rule or, if they were, their views did not abate the fear which the Muscovites inspired in London. This factor was the constitutional laziness of the Russians: they were credited with the same amount of energy which our people possess when occasion demands it.

After making enquiries I got in touch with a Russian family in St. Petersburg, which was willing to accept me as a paying guest, and instruct me in the language, for a very trifling sum. The plan seemed a sound one, and a highly attractive additional incentive offered itself: the War Office in London and the Government of India had just introduced the system of interpreterships in various modern languages. Of course, it had been in vogue in our Asiatic dominions for many years as regards Oriental tongues, but the acquirement or knowledge of those of Europe had been discouraged rather than otherwise. It was thought that linguistic attainments must have cost time which should have been more usefully employed in other ways; nor can one wonder at this view of highly placed military authorities when we reflect that, even to-day, representatives of British firms, seeking business



or trade abroad, are still to be found who can only speak their own language, and to whom foreign weights and measures are a sealed book: their employers will not spend the money for service which could find all sorts of highly profitable openings.

The change of front respecting officer linguists was made when Lord Wolseley held the post of Adjutant-General to the Forces, and India followed suit. The examinations were divided into two categories, of which one was simply a "pass" test, while the other qualified a successful candidate as a "First-class Interpreter," and the names of the officers in each class were recorded at the War Office. This was the only inducement offered with respect to such languages as French, German, Dutch, and so forth; but Russian was placed on quite a different footing: there was no reward for merely passing, which implied a somewhat meagre standard of learning, but the interpretership carried with it a prize of £200, a sum which would amply repay those fortunate enough to defeat the examiners. At that time, some forty years ago, and for long afterwards, the policy was usually against permitting officers to cover their legitimate expenses, so the new departure was quite a notable one, and, incidentally, reflected the anxiety prevailing in London. The standard for an interpretership was naturally very high, but was well worth the attempt, given a fair amount of leisure.

The family which was to receive me at St. Petersburg was one of good standing, the head of it having been employed for many years in the Russian Admiralty, while one of the sons was an officer in the Guards. There was no difficulty in my procuring the *visa* for my passport, without which no reputable traveller could enter the autocrat's realm, for I was not a member of the Jewish race, which was debarred from entering Russia, except under very special circumstances indeed, and my departure from England took place towards the end of January 1888. Transportation on the continent in those days was nothing like as rapid as it became afterwards, and, as it would have been unwise to count my chickens—the £200—



before they were hatched, a berth in a sleeping car was too costly ; in fact, the journey was somewhat dreary until the Russian frontier was reached.

The scene then changed altogether : the scrutiny of officials as soon as the train pulled up at Wirballen, the new costumes, the lethargic manner in which everything was conducted, all these factors made the transition from Germany into Russia much more remarkable than crossing the border-line separating the former from France. One acquired somehow an impression of great space and an absence of hurry, more than ample time being allowed before resuming the journey. It was contrary to the Queen's Regulations for the Army for an officer to wear uniform abroad unless special permission had been obtained previously. I had not asked for this, as it would probably have been refused, but took my uniform with me on the off-chance of its coming in useful. The Customs authorities at Wirballen were quite polite, but made a fairly exhaustive inspection of the baggage, especially in the case of the fair sex, but I had a stroke of luck : the attendant began by inspecting a tin uniform case, and, at the top of its contents, lay a blue tunic ; thereupon a senior official pushed him somewhat violently aside, and passed all my belongings without further ado. An excellent luncheon filled the time pleasantly until we were allowed to enter the train. In my compartment was an Englishman, resident in Russia, and, in the course of conversation, he showed me his device for escaping import duties—which were very high indeed—although he declared that he had no pull with the Customs officers : he had with him some pieces of silk, embroidered with gold, the tariff on which was apparently the same as if the whole consignment were of solid gold—a terrific tax. These goods he had deposited in his hold-all, a suspiciously large one it appeared to me. He said he always unstrapped it for inspection, and it had never hitherto been examined in the course of many journeys !

At Kovno, on the Niemen, the train passed through a short tunnel ; its construction could have been avoided when the line between Wirballen and St. Petersburg was

being built, but the Emperor Nicholas I, a real autocrat, had issued imperative orders that, as other countries possessed tunnels, Russia should also have at least one. The gauge of the line was 5 feet instead of the customary 4 feet 8½ inches. This reminded me of what we had been taught at the Staff College with respect to Russia, namely, that the difference of gauge was due to strategical reasons in order to hamper if not to prevent the invasion of Russia by a large army. The reasoning did not seem altogether logical, because the disparity would have been equally inconvenient to Russians invading Germany. The truth is that the engineers made a mistake : they meant to have adopted the standard gauge, but miscalculated it. A good many years passed before all intelligence officers concerned assimilated this fact ; indeed, as late as the year 1904, one distinguished officer—not a Russian—asked me what the explanation was, although the information had been recorded and indexed in his department several years previously. However, even the most brainy of modern staff officers commit occasional errors.

After a night in the Russian train we reached the capital somewhat late in the evening, and I selected the first omnibus I saw, that of the Hôtel de France, then and for some time afterwards the leading caravanserai in the city ; it was decidedly old-fashioned, but the cuisine was very good, and the proprietor, a Belgian, prided himself on having the best cellar in St. Petersburg.

On the morning after my arrival the first thing to be done was to purchase a fur coat : winter was still in full blast, and my English garments had not been much protection in the omnibus the night before. I was warned at the hotel that the custom in Russia was, as in Oriental countries, to bargain, and by no means to pay the price originally demanded. Of course my finances restricted me to a cheap fur ; sables were beyond me, although many times cheaper then than in 1914, so I decided on a racoon *shuba*, a very warm and enduring skin if a trifle heavy. The advantage of such a garment is that it has an enormous collar which comes well up to the top of one's head, and covers the face without knocking one's fur cap

about. Asking the price of what suited my requirements I was told that it was 250 roubles, about £25. After countering this demand—bearing in mind my own experiences in India—with an offer of 65 roubles, a bargain was finally struck at 130 roubles ; it appeared afterwards that this was about 20 roubles too much, but time pressed, and the hall porter had to levy his commission on the shop-keeper, to whom he had recommended me, so that I did not do so badly all things considered. It was an excellent and most durable garment.

Not wishing to waste any time, as I could only remain abroad for rather less than a couple of months, I transferred myself immediately to the family where I was to stay, and most kind people they were. As regards the British Embassy the situation was peculiar. That extraordinarily able man, the late Sir Robert Morier, represented his Sovereign, and he did not appreciate a number of English officers visiting Russia, especially the capital and Moscow ; his reason was a sound one : some of these gentlemen had imagined that it might be possible for them to pick up some valuable information regarding Russian designs, and, unaware that, so to speak, their every movement was known to the police, their zeal had occasionally led them into difficulties. My journey was, however, only for the purpose of learning something about the language and the people, nor was I vain enough to think that illicit knowledge could be acquired by a stranger. An old friend of the ambassador's, the late Duke of Westminster, had, however, most kindly given me a letter of introduction to him, which resulted in an invitation to dinner and an introduction to General Richter, the Head of the Emperor's Military Household, and, consequently, one of the most influential men in Russia.

Although his master, the Emperor Alexander III, was a Russian of the Russians, General Richter, a native of the Baltic Provinces, was a Lutheran, and had never changed to the Orthodox Faith, whose hand was apt to lie heavy on other denominations. A kinder man than my new acquaintance could not be found. It was customary, towards the end of the winter before the snow disappeared,

for the Emperor to hold two reviews of the Imperial Guard. I was invited to attend both of them ; Fortune certainly favoured me, because, on each occasion, I was invited to luncheon at the Winter Palace together with the staff. After the meal was finished the Emperor and Empress made the round of their guests, and talked with most of them. It was my first acquaintance with royalty, but they set one at one's ease immediately, and I was able to contribute something to the conversations by mentioning that my grand-uncle, who turned the French out of Egypt in the year 1801—Lord Hutchinson of Alexandria—had been with the Russian Army, as military plenipotentiary, at the time of the Treaty of Tilsit.

Lord Hutchinson—who succeeded his brother, the Earl of Donoughmore—had been educated partly at the Military Academy at Strasburg, and was also for a time on the staff of La Fayette during the French Revolution. When Abercrombie was given the command of the expedition to Egypt, he insisted on having my grand-uncle as his second-in-command.

Hutchinson came of a clever, versatile family, and his father was a real prince of nepotists : in those days patronage was held in very few hands, and this Secretary of State for Ireland (before the Union) was said to be the most grasping man of his day. At that time regiments were known by the name of those who raised them, or who were their colonels-in-chief. This by no means implied that these honorary officers necessarily performed any military duty, but they drew pay and distributed patronage.

Hutchinson's father actually obtained a commission for a girl relative. Of course she never joined her corps, but, in those purchase days, a commission was worth a substantial sum of money. The lady, however, did not sell out, but lived to a good old age, her only grievance being that, after a period of time, she was removed from the full-pay list, and placed on half-pay ! Public opinion was, however, becoming a little more educated, and this appointment raised such a scandal that it was the last case of its kind. My grandfather, Lorenzo Hely-Hutchin-



son, also owed much to his father : he drew army half-pay—£133 5s. 8d. annually—for years after he had become a clergyman of the Established Church of Ireland, and long after the Union. Our modern democratic nepotism must regret those palmy days !

After the first luncheon His Majesty did me a kindness which shows how thoughtful he was for a very unimportant bird of passage : he remarked that I would probably wish to see the rooms in the Winter Palace, which had been occupied by Nicholas I and Alexander II. This was a great privilege, for the apartments in question were kept locked and were in charge of a sentry.

After we were dismissed General Voyerikov, Deputy Chief of the Military Household, conducted me to my destination : the sentry was there under arms, but no key ! My guide, who ought to have known its whereabouts, was greatly perturbed, for he was aware that I would meet the Emperor again at the second luncheon, and it was quite possible that he would ask me whether his orders had been carried out. My companion would very probably have been disgraced if his Sovereign should learn the truth, but, anxious as I was to see the rooms, a fellow-feeling for him lurked in my heart, and I reassured him. After a great hunt the key was found before the second parade, so all was well.

The apartments were exceedingly simple in every respect, and very small ; the toilet articles were of the plainest description, and everything was kept as at the time of the two deaths, the blood-stained sheets of the Liberator, Alexander II, being a rather gruesome sight. The missing key laid the foundation of a future friendship when my guide had become Chief of the Military Household and I was Military Attaché. He remembered how differently things might have turned out for him, as the Emperor did ask me whether the apartments had been opened for my inspection, and I was careful not to mention the hitch which had occurred !

I made a *faux pas* at my first luncheon : seated between the Governor of St. Petersburg, General von Adelssohn—from the Baltic Provinces—and another high official, I



asked one of them if he would be so kind as to pass me the salt. A look of pained surprise passed over his countenance, and evidently I had committed a *bêtise*. He consulted with his neighbour in Russian, and then the latter supplied my needs, explaining that asking one of his countrymen to pass the salt was equivalent to wishing him ill; yet bread and salt are the recognised gifts of honour and devotion in their land. Russians are very superstitious even in the highest circles of society. I was staying once with a magnate when he heard that the tracks of a fine bear had been seen a few miles away, so he prepared to set forth and kill it. When he was about to enter his sleigh I wished him good luck; to my dismay he told me there was no object in his going, as I had destroyed his chance by my ill-timed remark. He decided, however, to risk it, in the hope that Providence would prevent my spell from working, as I was only a foreigner, but the bear escaped.

In March 1888, the last and smallest of the State balls was to be given, and General Richter most kindly said that an invitation would come my way, a quite unexpected honour. Unfortunately, the German Emperor, William I, died a few days before the event, which was consequently abandoned.

The winter was then beginning to pass, the snow was melting, and the date for my departure was at hand; there had been some skating, but nothing like as much as I had expected: there was no lack of ice—the rapid Neva was frozen and turned into a highway—but the cold often made it so hard that skates would not bite. By the time I started on my homeward journey a good deal of working Russian had filtered into my system; I could, for instance, ask a policeman the way and understand his reply. One great point in favour of the language is that, speaking generally, one can take an English or a Russian passage and translate it correctly almost word for word. The accentuation is difficult because there are no rules for it, so that practice alone can make the student more or less efficient in pronunciation. The verbs are, however, worse owing to the peculiarity of Russian—a Slavonic

language which has an alphabet consisting of three dozen letters and signs—because they are used in different “aspects,” as they are termed. For example, if you wish to say that you are going to see so-and-so, you should use a verb which means whether you are going on foot, in a carriage, or on horseback ; also whether you are going only once or, possibly, more than once, and so on. It is, perhaps, this highly complicated system which renders Russians so loquacious : they will talk and talk and talk for many hours on end about nothing in particular very often, a ceaseless flow.

When the Bolsheviks seized the reins of power they decided to simplify their native or, rather, as they were mostly of the Jewish faith, their adopted tongue by introducing various improvements : they modified the grammar by abolishing the “hard ” and “soft ” marks of pronunciation, and by having one letter “e” instead of three, although they still permit other letters, such as “d ” and “t,” to be written in different ways. It may be that the old orthography was beyond them.

They also brought the calendar into line with that of Western nations ; attempts had been made in this direction in former days, but the Greek Church had been successful in opposing the change. The difference between the Julian and Gregorian styles being increased by one day in every hundred years, it follows that, in course of time, our—Gregorian—Christmas would coincide with the Julian midsummer, so that one of the two must be wrong.

Accustomed as I was to hunting and race riding, it was very interesting to observe the manner in which the Russians treated their horses : they were kept, even in great establishments, in very hot, unventilated stables ; then, in the dead of winter, when large fires were kept burning in the streets of St. Petersburg at night for the coachmen, the animals—which always trotted at a speed of not less than eighteen miles an hour—would arrive, reeking hot, at a house, and wait until three or four o'clock in the morning without a shred of clothing on them in the bitter cold. Yet it was the rarest thing in the world to find a horse touched in the wind, but

an English one would have died under far less severe conditions.

Altogether my first visit to Russia was most interesting : her methods, new to me, always afterwards gave me the impression, after crossing the frontier into that country, that I was in a different world.

On my return to England there was a short course of instruction at Aldershot with infantry and cavalry units, and then, as I belonged to the Indian establishment, a long spell of leave was available until the trooping season should commence in the autumn of the year 1888. Some of this spare time was utilised in adding considerably to the knowledge gained in St. Petersburg, and so I decided to face the examiners of the Civil Service Commissioners at the next examination for interpreterships. My subjects were French, German, and Russian, the first two having been familiar to me all my life. For some reason or another my *vivâ voce* trials all took place on the same afternoon, one after the other, but I was duly certified as an interpreter in all three.

After waiting for a couple of months or so I enquired from a successful candidate whether he had received his £200, and found that he had been paid some time previously. This looked suspicious, and I wondered what the catch was. Enquiry at the War Office soon enlightened me : it appeared that, if anybody was to part with the money, it should be the Government of India, as I had come home to join the Staff College, and was due to rejoin my battery in the East, officers not being seconded in those days for this purpose. On the other hand it was quite obvious that it would be wasting paper to apply to India, as its rules regarding Russian quite manifestly did not cover my case. The outlook was decidedly black : the War Office brushed aside my excellent arguments, and there was no other case on all fours with mine, but, of course, the correspondence, which took on a nasty tone at last, never got as far as the Head of Department concerned.

Some time previously I had met at dinner Sir Ralph Thompson, then the Permanent Under-Secretary of State

at the War Office, and had told him how officers were mulcted of various sums in many unfair ways. He said that he would always be glad to go personally into any such matter if he knew of it, so I took the liberty—as a forlorn hope—of laying the case before him. By return of post a warrant for £200 reached me! Never say die.

Somehow or another my leave was extended until April 1889; there was going to be a vacancy for me in the Horse Artillery at Dorchester, but a highly placed officer in India told me that a staff appointment in that country would be found, and so I went back there, my passage being provided in that very old-fashioned line, the Peninsular and Oriental Company. It had always been the belief that an officer, who had been to the Staff College, need not hope for appointment to the Right of the Line; when I interviewed the Deputy Adjutant-General for Artillery at the War Office, the late Sir Edwin Markham—one of the best and smartest men I have ever met—he said that, far from Camberley being a bar, he thought that every officer, who could manage it, should go there. I had served for some years in the Horse Artillery as a subaltern, and had always hoped to be re-appointed as a captain, but it seemed foolish to throw over the Indian offer.

I was posted to Delhi, at that period a small but delightful station: one could leave the fort after luncheon, stick some pig, and be back by five o'clock. Before getting staff employment worth having, it was indispensable to pass the Higher Standard test in Hindustani: this was not a difficult task, but I had to go all the way to Calcutta for the examination. On the journey a wrong signal sent my train at night into the buffers of a siding, when some forty people were killed and many more seriously injured; it was a dreadful sight. The examiners ploughed me, quite deservedly, but, shortly afterwards, a special Board at Delhi gave me my certificate.

Presently, I was appointed to act on the Staff at Peshawar, our outpost against the Russian attack, with the prospect of being made permanent in a few months' time.



The invasion of India greatly occupied the minds of the authorities then in that country, and the Quartermaster-General—Sir James Browne (“Buster” Browne)—came to Peshawar in connection with a scheme of defence. The idea of advancing to meet the Muscovite forces in the hilly country, practically devoid of roads, had been abandoned for the moment: the new idea was for us to withdraw behind the Indus and face the enemy on our own ground, nice and open, with rail communication to our bases. There were obvious arguments for and against this plan, but the fixed idea, uppermost in the minds of both schools, was that a Russian invasion might happen at almost any time. My mind was open on the subject: my previous stay in Russia had shown me troops of magnificent physique, more numerous in the St. Petersburg Military District alone than all our available army under arms in the United Kingdom, but whether a *coup de main* on our eastern empire was intended I had no idea, although everything had seemed peaceful enough in the Russian capital.

From what I had seen of Russia and her high officials, it had not appeared to me to be probable that such a danger existed: the Russians are lazy by temperament, and like putting off until to-morrow what should be done to-day; then again, great preparations would have to be made beforehand, and something about them was bound to leak out, just as we became aware, some time before the event, of what was an infinitely simpler undertaking, namely, the seizure of Merv some years previously. On our side the authorities in India were apt to get into a groove: they had only one strategical problem to consider, whereas, in England, the Government was faced with a number of political and military questions, which reacted on one another, and often made us appear vacillating or timorous, when we were really attempting to balance the various advantages and disadvantages so as to find the most suitable compromise.

For the time being the scheme of fighting in India behind the Indus held the stage, to be replaced not long afterwards by the proposal to meet the enemy in the mountains,

which meant costly and difficult road making. In the meantime, however, things were quiet enough for the troops: the usual routine duties were carried out, and, as the hot season was at hand, there was little outdoor work to be performed.

The chief clerk in my office was a non-commissioned officer of the Royal Irish Regiment; he was a capital fellow, except that he had one failing, namely, the bottle. On entering my room one morning he was half seas over, so I said :

“ Really, Williams, either you or I will have to leave this office, and I do not propose that it shall be me.”

He went off without a word to bring me the papers to be dealt with. On the top of them was a telegram, which he had already digested: it was from the Adjutant-General at Simla to say that I was to proceed forthwith to Burma, to rejoin my battery, which had been moved thither! It was a horrid shock, but I could not help laughing at my remark being so neatly turned against me, and my clerk must have chuckled when I had given him the alternative.

I saw through the game at once, from the fact that my successor was not qualified by Indian Army Regulations—a library in themselves—for the post, but he had a great pull at Head-quarters. I telegraphed to Simla for leave to go there, but was informed that it could serve no good purpose; I went, nevertheless, and was promptly asked what I meant by being so impertinent. I had spent a week in Burma some years previously, and did not like it. On this present occasion, in 1890, the late General Sir Charles Nairne, Inspector-General of Artillery in India, stood my friend, and I was transferred to a battery at Calcutta in the Bengal command, where I spent some of my leisure in inventing a dirigible torpedo, only to find that I had stumbled on a profound secret, which had proved such a gold-mine to Mr. Brennan!

By the autumn I was heartily sick of India, and was wondering how I could manage to get home again. Having effected an exchange once before as a captain this course was impracticable, but Providence took care of me. A brother artilleryman wrote one day to say that his battery

was under orders for England, and that a staff appointment would shortly fall vacant, which was to be for me. He, however, would obtain it failing myself. We had a brilliant idea: we would try and get *transferred* to each other's battery. The proposal was sanctioned, so everybody was delighted. I joined my new unit at Jullundur, and arrived at Ipswich, my next station, at the end of December 1890. One other field battery was quartered there also, and a very charming place it was.

Having abandoned the project of staff employ in India, there seemed little prospect of it at home; true, it was intimated that a staff-captaincy or a garrison instructorship might be had, but neither of these posts attracted me. I knew what I wanted, namely, an appointment at the Intelligence Division of the War Office; this Department had risen greatly in professional estimation since the advent of that remarkably able man, General Sir Henry Brackenbury, as its chief. Prior to his rule it had been looked upon as a cul-de-sac leading nowhere. It had really been called into existence after the Franco-German War of 1870-1, when the information, collected in peace time by the Great General Staff at Berlin, had proved to be of such enormous value both strategically and tactically. But this knowledge was the product of many years of carefully systematised labour, all bearing on some definite object.

Public attention was aroused in England to our lack of foresight, and a real Intelligence Division was instituted. Those in authority, however, had been brought up in a different school, and there was also the difficulty that suitable officers were not easy to find, especially those who had first-hand acquaintance with foreigners, their customs and temperament; we were too apt—and, in some respects, are still prone—to judge other peoples by our own standards, just as they themselves judge us. For instance, our troops have frequently been accused—by friend and foe alike—of being extremely ruthless: there was no foundation whatever for the charges, but, later on, foreign troops emulated, at least, if they did not surpass, the very deeds previously laid at our door.

One easily intelligible result of our new Intelligence Division's labours was that we got on the wrong tack until Brackenbury took charge in 1885 ; efforts were made to learn details about inland fortresses in France and Germany, which could by no possibility be of any value to our Government of the day, while more obviously important things were neglected. It is true that military information about Russia in Central Asia would have been appreciated, but there were difficulties in the way : the Russians are secretive among themselves, and did not favour the intrusion of British officials into that region ; secondly, our seekers after knowledge often hunted the wrong hare by theorising on political possibilities instead of concentrating on military information ; while, thirdly, the financial authorities at the War Office starved the Department : their main object was to cut down expenditure, owing to want of money, to the lowest possible limit and trust to luck. Some of them were most able men, while there arose, very occasionally, a financial genius such as Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson, but the political situation at home was the chief interest of Government and Opposition alike, the Ins and Outs, and economy, at almost any price, was the watchword in order to disarm or to incite criticism.

A marked improvement occurred, however, when Brackenbury took charge after his return from the Gordon Relief Expedition. He did not, of course, succeed in getting all the money he wanted, but the Finance Department was able to be more generous and, what was most important of all, the Intelligence Division was organised on a really practical basis. Brackenbury left for India in 1891, and his departure was a great loss to the War Office.

In the summer of 1891 I received a letter from the chief assistant to the new Director of Intelligence, General (now Sir Edward) Chapman, another distinguished artilleryman, who had shown himself a very capable Chief of Staff to Sir Donald Stewart during the Afghan War of 1878-80. His career had hitherto lain in India, where he had also been Quartermaster-General, and he was therefore considered to be specially fitted for his new post,



as Russian affairs loomed large on the military and political horizons. Somehow or other the British Government had not managed matters well: when the intention of Russia to seize Merv had become fairly manifest, some years previously, we had threatened forcibly to prevent this; it was a foolish thing to do, as the Russians knew quite well that we had no possible means of preventing the execution of their project. We could, of course, have gone to war with no ultimate profit to either side, but this course was not really seriously considered in London. There were, however, advocates in India in favour of it, who committed themselves in print to the amazing proposition that we should drive back all Russian troops westwards of the Caspian! This chimerical project would not have mattered if the Russians had not succeeded in getting hold of the book in question, *The Defence of India*. As the responsibility for authorship rested with Sir Charles MacGregor, Quartermaster-General in India, they naturally concluded its views to be those of the British Government, so that a good deal of friction ensued in due course.

The letter, which has been mentioned, asked me whether I would care to join the Intelligence Division as a purely temporary measure, at any rate for not more than two years, but there was to be no question of my obtaining a permanent post in it. I longed to grasp the floating straw, but there were difficulties in the way. I might possibly be in London for two years on temporary work, so that, instead of my being seconded, and another captain being appointed in my place, my major would find himself bereft of his second-in-command for perhaps quite a long time. He happened, however, to be absent on leave, so that I laid the proposal before the lieutenant-colonel commanding. He most kindly authorised me to accept, but my major, a capital fellow, objected on his return; it was then too late. He was, of course, quite right, but meanwhile I had reported myself at the War Office on the day after the offer reached me. Luck again!



## CHAPTER II

THIS change was the beginning of an entirely new life ; ordinary staff work in India, as in England, was mostly a matter of routine, a very pleasant time with not much to do, and the War Office was looked upon, in those days, with a certain amount of awe tinged with a feeling of dislike for its parsimonious treatment of officers.

My luck on this occasion was better than I had expected, for I was attached to the section which dealt with Russia and Asia generally. Under Brackenbury's administration a most useful system had been introduced of compiling exhaustive military reports on the various countries of the world, their armies in peace and on a war footing, their resources, communications by road, rail and water, and a number of other matters relevant to the subject.

Captain (afterwards Lieutenant-General Sir James) Grierson was the Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General in charge of Section D, as it was named ; he had a staff captain under him, an officer of the Indian Army who dealt more particularly with Indian affairs, and a first-class warrant officer as chief clerk. For any special work a section might have an officer temporarily attached to it, which was how I came to enter the Division.

A military report was wanted on the Grand Duchy of Finland, about which very little was known from a military or, indeed, any other point of view. All my life geography had been the weakest among my many weak points : it has always been a mystery to me how I managed to gain the qualifying number of marks in my entrance examination for a cadetship at Woolwich, and time had not greatly improved my knowledge. Of course certain countries and places were known to me because I had been in them, but my standard was really contemptible : for

instance, I had once mistaken the James River for the St. Lawrence ! Nor was I at all certain, when my new duties were sketched out for me, where Finland was, beyond the general fact that it was situated somewhere in the region of Scandinavia. As time went on, however, I discovered that other people, more highly placed than myself, were no better geographers than I was, and, after all, this difficulty of ignorance was not an insuperable one, nor was it mentioned by me.

A confidential work, compiled by the General Staff at St. Petersburg, had recently come into the possession of the War Office, and this furnished me with my best materials, which were already arranged in a form somewhat similar to that laid down for our own military handbooks. It had, in addition, an exhaustive report on the roads and tracks in Finland, an important matter, as railways were scarce there. The Russian system was to spell foreign proper names phonetically, a great convenience in some respects, especially in conversation. But it has also a drawback : for example, I was totally ignorant of the Finnish language, just as everybody else in the War Office was, so it was obvious that the thousands of names of places in the Russian work would have to be spelt phonetically. This might not matter much in the case of British invaders asking for information, and there was no other course open, short of getting some outside person to transliterate into Finnish spelling which, on the other hand, would have prevented the invader from getting anywhere near the proper pronunciation. Besides, the subject was of too confidential a nature.

These military reports were eventually issued to British consuls in the countries affected, and some years afterwards, in conversation with Mr. Cook, our representative at Helsingfors—a very able man—the question of these compilations came up. He said :

“ Now, some time ago, the War Office sent me a copy of a military report on Finland ; I forget who wrote it, but he must be an ignorant ass, for I can't make head or tail of the names, and I am sure no Finn could ! ”

We had a hearty laugh when he realised who his visitor

was, for it would have been cruel to have kept him in ignorance, and we decided to say nothing about it: the Finns, although in the main discontented, were not in the least likely to see a British army land on their shores.

The first thing that struck me about my new task in London was that it would certainly occupy me fully for several months, even if nothing else were given me to do. It was, of course, necessary that I should make myself acquainted with the state of affairs in the section, and there was besides a great deal of information to be studied respecting the Russian Army in particular. The official hours were short: one was supposed to be in the office by eleven o'clock, and leave at five, with as much time, within very broad limits, as was required for luncheon. On the other hand, it was understood that work would be continued both before and after the fixed hours whenever this should be necessary.

The Intelligence Division was in constant and direct communication with the Foreign Office, which frequently consulted it on various political subjects and their bearing on the military situation. This was extremely interesting, although, of course, the subjects were much less numerous than was the case later on. It was likewise intensely formal: the recognised procedure was—whether the Director of Intelligence raised a question or whether he was consulted—to begin all letters as follows: “The Director of Military Intelligence presents his compliments to the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and begs, etc., etc.” Possibly the matter itself could be compressed into fewer words than this preamble, so that an appreciable amount of time might have been saved by adopting a less verbose style, while, in those days, the financial authorities at the War Office would not sanction the cost of a single typewriter. The War Office had got on very well without machinery, and the cost would be prohibitive, in their judgment, because, if one section were allotted one, the others would, of course, clamour for most-favoured-nation treatment. This penurious attitude was not changed to any

extent for the better until about nine years afterwards, that is to say, at the time of the outbreak of the war in South Africa.

The original force consisted of three divisions, each destined to operate in widely separated parts of that country. One of the three divisional commanders, Sir Francis Clery, was then occupying a high post in the Adjutant-General's branch, so he used his influence as regards typewriters, and to such good effect that sanction was given for the issue of ONE, which, of course, he sequestered!

Very interesting were the despatches written to the Foreign Office by Her Majesty's ambassadors and ministers in the various foreign capitals; all those which had any bearing on politico-military matters were circulated to the Intelligence Division, so that one soon gained an excellent insight into the temperaments and abilities of England's representatives. *Trop de zèle* was not encouraged by the Foreign Office, and its agents were well aware of this fact. Telegraphic communication had, of course, rendered initiative unnecessary as a rule, nor could it be expected that every ambassador or minister should possess the qualities desirable in a representative who could commit his Government—and his country—to some vital but possibly inexpedient line of policy. Not many years before I joined the War Office in 1891 Sir Edward Thornton, our ambassador at Constantinople, had received instructions from London to put forward a certain demand without loss of time. He did so and, on returning to his residence, was met with a cablegram countermanding them. It was, as he truthfully pointed out, too late: the demand was promptly refused, and the British lion had to eat humble pie. The ambassador, however, was removed from his post.

Every rule has, nevertheless, its exceptions, and the late Sir Robert Morier, who had been appointed to St. Petersburg in 1885, was undoubtedly one of the most remarkable among them, as will be seen later. His despatches were models of lucidity, sound information, and vigorous, weighty opinions. One always learned



something from each of them, and they were, indeed, a liberal education in themselves.

Various odd jobs fell to my lot, so it seemed likely that fully two years would be necessary for the completion of the report on Finland. A sum, amounting to a few hundreds yearly, was at the disposal of the Director of Intelligence in order that his officers might travel in the countries dealt with by their sections. This was equivalent to letting some members of the staff have interesting and often very pleasant trips abroad at trifling cost to their own pockets ; the sum allotted for any particular tour was not sufficient to defray all expenses, but, in those days, one was expected by the financial authorities to be out of pocket when away on the public service. One officer in particular, Major Wemyss, was blessed with a decidedly fertile brain, and his principal work was connected with North America as a whole. He actually persuaded his superiors that it was desirable for him to visit the United States and Canada in order to draw up a scheme for the defence of the latter's three-thousand-mile frontier against an invasion by her neighbour ! He was absent quite a long time, and enjoyed himself immensely, bless him ! He was a real loss to the Army when, not long afterwards, he left it to go into business, in which he has deservedly succeeded.

Even in my early days at the War Office, our sections were not cut off from each other by watertight compartments : matters which interested two or more would be discussed together, and this was obviously highly desirable. Russia, for instance, had her own problems regarding Germany to handle, and their solutions naturally affected the views of the British Government of the day. Towards the end of the summer of the year 1891 the relations of those two great continental Powers were by no means happy, while it was an axiom that war between the Russ and the Teuton meant a simultaneous attack on the latter by France. There was, of course, no formal Franco-Russian alliance at that time, but matters were trending already in that direction.

We knew a good deal about the situation in Germany

then from other than direct official sources, because Captain Grierson, the head of the Russian section, knew the former country intimately, and was on very friendly terms with several members of the Great General Staff at Berlin, whence we acquired much interesting military information about Russia. For various reasons—none of them, as events showed, sound ones—the German Emperor, William II, had got it into his head that his neighbour was meditating an unprovoked attack on his country, and that he would have to fight East and West simultaneously. His anxiety was accentuated by the absence of the French Military Attaché at Berlin from the parade always held on September 2nd, the anniversary of Sedan. There was nothing odd in this fact: it was not to be expected that a true son of Gaul would attend the function—each nation has its own characteristics. The rumours of a Russian concentration on the German border became more and more definite, the Great General Staff began at last to get a little anxious, and the Kaiser was pressed, by a distinguished mutual friend of his and mine, Mr. Poultney Bigelow, to anticipate the onslaught and attack Russia unawares. This meant a winter campaign, and the only records on this point did not suggest any chance of success in the long run: 1812 was not forgotten. Apart from other reasons for not precipitating a war with Russia the general military opinion in Berlin in 1891 was that success was highly improbable, and it remained for Hindenburg to show, twenty-three years afterwards, that the prospects of such an attack by Germany on a country sure to be unprepared were really very bright indeed.

In the early part of 1915 the Germans were quite confident that their Western Front was impregnable, and the only reason why they maintained such vast forces there was that Falkenhayn, who had succeeded Moltke as Chief of the Great General Staff, hoped to pierce the Franco-British front with the additional aid of the four newly raised but excellent army corps, which were ready for the field by the commencement of February 1915.

On the other hand the situation of the Austro-Hungarian

army on the Russian front was not a very happy one, and was strengthened by some German divisions. Conrad von Hoetzendorff, the Austrian leader, aware of his danger if attacked, proposed to Hindenburg that a grand simultaneous onslaught should be made on the extreme Russian north and south flanks, the remainder of the enemy's front to be held by an Austro-German offensive. Such a coup, if successful, would have put the Russians out of action for a long time, which could have been utilised to transport great German forces from east to west, break through, and roll up the French and British armies.

Hindenburg accepted this plan out of regard for the Austrian position, but Falkenhayn was sceptical. He preferred his own scheme of clearing first the Western Front, but gave way to Hindenburg so far as to send him not indeed all the reinforcements from the west for which he had asked, but three of the four new corps and the Alsace-Lorraine corps, the fourth new one taking the place of the latter on the Western Front. Falkenhayn therefore really adopted half measures, often a fatal thing to do, and they were rewarded only by a half success—the wonderful tactical victory of the Masurian Lakes; but the desired strategical results were not attained, although an entire Russian army had been annihilated.

It is therefore possible that Mr. Bigelow's proposal might have had auspicious results, but the German Emperor did not wish to fight Russia, and the Great General Staff at Berlin was opposed to the idea. At that time—1891—and for several years afterwards—until after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, in fact—the Germans did not look forward with relish to a clash of arms; even in Berlin too little was known about Russia, but a country in a ring fence, stretching from the Baltic to the Pacific, was apparently best left alone; at any rate, it was considered unwise to precipitate hostilities. William II had also another reason for discarding his friend's advice, namely, that, as he himself said, there remained only two autocrats in the world—himself and Alexander III. On no account therefore would he hasten a war, but his anxiety lest

Germany should be attacked increased in the autumn of 1891.

The matter was, of course, of the deepest interest also to the British Government. From a cold-blooded point of view a struggle—gigantic as it was bound to be—between the three leading military Powers of Europe was likely to be extremely beneficial to ourselves, politically and commercially. The tension in Asia would cease, Egypt—then a running sore in the French side—would fall more completely under our domination, and our traders and workers would benefit enormously.

The upshot was that it was decided to send a British officer to investigate matters on the spot, and this step had the hearty concurrence of the Great General Staff at Berlin. The choice fell upon me, and the prospect of taking a part in such a serious affair was entrancing. The main problem was to discover whether any unusual movements of troops had been or were taking place on the Russo-German border, a stretch of country many hundreds of miles in length and of great depth. The Russians issued monthly a pamphlet giving the various divisions and the troops composing them, together with the headquarters of each unit. Other official publications gave the respective peace and war establishments, but there was a catch, as our American friends say: it was known to the various foreign staffs that Russian troops in Poland were always maintained on a footing not far short of war strength, and information on this point was contained in another little book, which gave the real strengths. Fortunately a copy of it, of recent date, marked "secret" in red print and "to be destroyed as soon as the new list is issued," on the cover, had come into our possession, so that there was excellent material for me to work upon.

On the other hand there were difficulties: Russians are secretive by nature, and objected strongly to any unauthorised person endeavouring to gather military information, especially in Russian Poland, which, as the map showed, drove a deep wedge splitting German territory into the shape of a huge cone. This offered great strategical advantages to an active, intelligent Russian



commander, who might keep the Germans in the dark as to his main point of attack. It was therefore essential that my reconnaissance should be carried out with great care, so as to avoid raising suspicion. Besides the uniformed Russian authorities, police, military and other, there was also the secret police to be reckoned with, and nobody could tell when a member of it was trailing him. On one occasion a number of Russians were conversing in a St. Petersburg drawing-room, and mention was made of this body; a very pretty and accomplished girl present said that nobody could guess who among us belonged to that force, although they were all related to one another.

I left London for Berlin as the first stop on my journey in mid-autumn of 1891, intending to discuss the situation with the German General Staff. Before starting it was intimated to me quite clearly that, if there should be any trouble with the Russian authorities, the War Office would not only disown me altogether but would likewise inflict punishment in order to show perfectly clean hands, a procedure which might not, however, have carried conviction to the Russian mind. Numerous details were explained to me in the German capital, and the importance, which had already been realised by me, of having nothing incriminating on my person was inculcated. It was a matter of common knowledge that the staff, especially the hall porters, of hotels and private dwelling-houses in Russia had to render daily lists of every new arrival.

It occurred to me that the best plan would be to break my journey first at the fortress and town of Kovno on the Niemen, close to the German frontier at Eydtkuhnen (Wirballen). It was an important trading centre for agricultural produce, and, arriving there in the afternoon, I proceeded to the leading hotel. There is, or was, a monument at Kovno with the legend that, in 1812, six hundred thousand Frenchmen crossed the Niemen as invaders, and that only sixty thousand survived to repass it. As a matter of fact, Napoleon's army comprised also vast numbers of foreign troops such as Germans,

then under the heel of the tyrant, but the inscription was, perhaps, as good as any other.

I had had some experience of uncomfortable quarters in other places, but the Kovno hostelry was, until that time, unique : the rooms were good enough, and the food plentiful and appetising, but the stench of the sanitary arrangements was dreadful ; nobody, however, seemed to notice this except myself. I merely registered my name as a tourist, and, as it was dark on my arrival, arranged for a carriage to drive me about on the morrow.

As luck would have it my driver was a chatty Pole, and, in my opinion, indiscreet ; perhaps he thought my appearance proclaimed me as not being a secret policeman. At any rate, he soon expressed his detestation of Russia and all things Russian. For my part I did not share his feelings, and, besides, he might have been an agent in disguise, so that reticence on my part seemed desirable. With a chance word here and there, however, it became evident that he had been speaking the truth, and as I had told him to drive me to any points of interest, he took me to, among other spots, some new military works in course of erection. Being without a map, the sun, my watch and approximate distance traversed enabled me to fix their location. Altogether the day was both interesting and pleasant.

Riga was my next point, being a great military centre, but my main objective was the Russian forces themselves. It seemed to me best to approach their territory from the eastward, one reason being that a new strategical railway was known to have been commenced some time previously, running through Volkovisk, a place of some military importance in the great wedge. Travelling by St. Petersburg to Moscow the journey for Poland was commenced ; I would have liked to have had an opportunity of stopping to see the battlefield of Borodino on my way, but had to forgo the pleasure. It may be remarked parenthetically that two nations often claim to have been victors in a particular battle : the Russians claim Borodino, and so do the French, who call it La Moskowa ; we claim the Alma, but so do the Russians, and the custom still

holds, as shown by numerous general actions during the Great War.

A weary journey landed me at my jumping-off point rather late at night ; rail communications in Russia were very indifferent and trains rare, which added to my difficulties. To cut a long story short, however, I witnessed the movements of troops of all arms going in various directions, but they all belonged to the normal garrisons ; I could identify whether any had been brought in from the east, for the quartering of the different units was, of course, known to me. With the best will in the world the Russian authorities could not conceal this information, nor shift troops about indiscriminately, as the difficulties of administration would have become insurmountable.

Seeing therefore that no fresh forces had been imported into Russian Poland—which would undoubtedly have been the case had war been contemplated at a more or less early date—it soon became evident that the movements, which had alarmed the German Emperor so greatly, had been due to the usual autumn manœuvres, on the conclusion of which the troops returned to their quarters, while the time-expired men were going home : large numbers manifestly belonged to this category, a fact which was confirmed by my entering into desultory conversation with some of the men.

Having acquired all the information which was necessary, I made for Warsaw, where I put up at the best hotel. To ensure freedom from inquisitive prying I had, after quitting Kovno, travelled during twelve nights. This had obviated the filling in of hotel reports as to myself, family and business, as anybody could enter a restaurant without being questioned. At Warsaw I called upon a bookseller, Mr. Wolff, in a large way of business ; he was half German and half Polish, and, as it happened, a man of calm judgment : he disliked Russian methods intensely, because they interfered with trade ; officials had to be suborned to do their duty, otherwise numberless vexatious obstacles would confront him. This was not surprising : while some 85 per cent. of the Russian population was totally illiterate, there were, on the other

hand, numerous universities scattered about the country, which opened up prospects of a livelihood in the public service to successful candidates.

Peter the Great had introduced the system of "tchins," each of which was the equivalent of some military grade, ranging from a full general—the highest obtainable—downwards. No man in Russia, however great his social position and birth—and many families were much more ancient than the Romanov dynasty—was eligible, for instance, to go to Court, unless he held some specified official appointment. The salaries even of the highest grades were exceedingly small, while the position of the lower ranks in, let us say, the civil service was wretched. Where a junior civil servant in England would receive £200 yearly, in pre-war days, his Russian colleague would probably get about £25, and be expected to live and dress decently. It was clearly impossible for the horde of officials to manage at all unless they received more or less substantial contributions from those on whom they could exert pressure. Nor did many of those, who could afford to maintain a suitable position, see anything wrong in demanding sums, from contractors and traders, which it would be well worth their while to accept; these men could not deal in trifles. Unless my Polish acquaintance at Warsaw fell into line the police and excise officials would have got him into trouble, and have broken up his business. A verbal introduction had been given to me in Germany, and I was able to satisfy him that I was a genuine visitor. He agreed that there was, at the moment, so far as he could judge, no prospect of Russia making war anywhere, but the Poles were hoping she would do so, as good might come of it for them. A cab driver in Warsaw told me his people, Poles, were ready to rise at any time. The fact is, that the majority of the Russian Poles seemed to be fond of intriguing, and the Russians put the military foot hard on their necks.

One night at Warsaw was enough for me, and then I took train for Dresden; the line in question was the only one in Russia of the standard European gauge, and there was a through carriage which obviated a change at the



frontier. A very curious thing happened to me there, and in my experience of many years of the Russian Empire unique: dog tired, when the border was reached, sleep held me fast, and I was suddenly awakened by a voice asking me my destination; it was speaking German, so I enquired whether we were in Germany. "Ja, wohl!" was the unmistakably Teutonic reply, and I responded with "Gott sei Dank!" (Thank God!). It was true: my passport had not been demanded by the Russian authorities before crossing the frontier, and such a thing never happened to me again at any hour of the day or night; my luggage consisted of a handbag only, and the hour was about 2 a.m., but it is a mystery how I came to be overlooked.

It was a delightful change from bleak Russia to Saxon Switzerland, a lovely country as seen from the train, and, arriving at Dresden in the afternoon, I descended at one of the very best and most moderately priced hotels I have ever been in.

Business, however, was the first thing to attend to. During my sojourn at Kovno, and ever since then, the information I had acquired was memorised. My memory happened to be a naturally good one, and it had had three years' intensive training, many years previously, at the Lycée Impérial de Versailles, where great attention was paid to word-perfect recitations from, for example, a long play of Racine's, learned during the school year. In fact, Fortune caused me to carry off the first prize once in that subject. Later on instruction in geometry had been imparted at the Friedrich-Wilhelm's Gymnasium in Berlin, but when I went up for a cadetship at Woolwich, our old friend Euclid had to be encountered. The only way I could defeat him was to learn his books off by heart. The same plan stood me in good stead on this occasion in Russia. As soon as I saw or heard something worth noting, I repeated it to myself over and over again until it was fixed in my mind; the next piece of intelligence was treated in the same manner, the first and second then repeated again in their proper order, and so on. By this means there was no difficulty in remembering, in their

sequence, notes about military works, troops, buildings, and all kinds of things connected with the object of my travels. The journeys by train at night afforded excellent opportunities for rehearsing all the different items, but I was glad when the Saxon capital was reached.

I commenced committing my reminiscences to paper about six o'clock in the afternoon, and the work was finished soon after four o'clock on the following morning, a matter of some seven thousand words; refreshments had been served in my room, so that there was no delay on that score. Dresden was such a pleasant city that I spent a couple of days there and then moved on to Berlin, where my report was handed over to the department of the Great General Staff concerned. After reading and having it copied the chief Intelligence officer said to me :

“ *Wissen Sie, da haben Sie uns etwas höchst wichtiges mitgeteilt* ” (You know, you have given us most valuable information). This related not only to the troops in Russian Poland, but also to the new works, which had been commenced at Kovno, and was news to Berlin.

The British Ambassador, Sir Edward Malet, and his wife, Lady Ermyntrude, were most hospitable, and so were the members of his staff. A State performance was due to take place at the Royal Opera in honour of the visit of the late King of Roumania, a Hohenzollern. Sir Edward most kindly offered to procure an invitation for me if this should prove to be possible; it meant, of course, that somebody else of standing would have to be left out, as the whole house, unlike the custom of State performances in London, was taken up for invited guests, and no member of the general public could obtain admittance. Apart from the invitation itself, however, there was a serious difficulty: my uniform was in England, and the function at Berlin necessitated the fullest of full dress. His Excellency explained the case to the Grand Master of the Ceremonies, Count Eulenburg, and he, in sending the card of invitation, most kindly said that, under the circumstances, I might appear in ordinary evening clothes.

It was certainly a magnificent sight; one had also ample

opportunities of seeing all the celebrities at close quarters, and of being presented to some of them, among others the Foreign Minister, Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, afterwards German Ambassador in London ; he was, not unnaturally, a good deal interested in my recent travels. There was a long *entr'acte*, during which the Emperor conversed with a number of his guests ; there had been a question whether I should also be presented, but it was thought this would look too marked, as, with the exception of the United States representatives, and one of their countrymen, my old friend, Mr. Poultney Bigelow, I was the only individual in plain clothes in the building.

It was during my stay in Berlin that I first knew what tea really is : the Chinese Minister had presented Lady Ermyntrude Malet with a small quantity of a quality quite unobtainable by ordinary mortals at any price, and I was honoured by being invited to drink some of it : the flavour was delicious, yet the water was scarcely discoloured. Years afterwards much the same thing happened : I was commanding our troops of occupation in North China—before the Revolution overthrew the Manchu dynasty—and we used to get our tea direct from the great firm of Messrs. Jardine & Company, who allowed us this favour. On one occasion, however, the crop had largely failed, so that our supply was running very low, and my wife was ill. Being on very friendly terms with the Viceroy of the metropolitan province of Chih-li and his principal mandarins, I asked one of the latter if he could let me have a small quantity for her, and he said he would, with great pleasure, send me a little. I had barely returned to my residence when a case of twenty pounds of tea arrived ! At once I recognised the same brew as I had tasted in Berlin nearly a score of years previously, and which had never been forgotten. On calling upon my Chinese friend to thank him, I remarked on the difference between his tea and ours.

“ Ah,” he replied, “ we do not allow this quality ever to get on the market.”

His behaviour was the more kindly, for as I was, after all, in command of troops occupying his native country,

there were frequent occasions when difficulties had to be settled between us, as we employed large numbers of Chinese workmen in the commissariat, and other departments, who, if they committed any offence against their fellow citizens, were dealt with by us under British law, and the native authorities naturally disliked this plan, which prevented the attentions of the official torturer, as well as blackmail.

From Berlin the next step was to return to London, where my reception, after the report had been digested, was really very pleasantly warm. German fears were completely pacified, and my normal duties were resumed. The political and military atmospheres remained quiet, but the authorities in India were always haunted by the fear of Russian aggression, and propounded schemes for its discomfiture. The scheme which then held the field was practically to ship all available troops from the United Kingdom thither if hostilities should become imminent. The authorities at home did not, however, consider such a course to be practicable. True, an invasion of our shores was highly improbable, even if Russia should be joined by France—with Egypt as pretext; nevertheless, public opinion would of itself have forbidden denuding this country of all its fighting men, except those locked up in Ireland.

The report on Finland had, at last, taken shape, and was about ready for the first rough proof. This kind of work was highly confidential, and it was known that certain foreign agents were always industriously seeking after knowledge; some of them were good paymasters. The system adopted for printing books of this nature was for the firm employed to divide the manuscript into a number of small portions, which were distributed among specially selected compositors. This course reduced the danger of leakage to its possible minimum, and, so far as my own experience goes, no confidential official work ever fell into wrong hands through the instrumentality of any of the men employed in its production.

Purchasers were, however, always on the look-out for wares of this nature, and were sufficiently enterprising: the



late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman told me, when he was Secretary of State for War in Mr. Gladstone's last administration, that a complete set of drawings of the Dover and Channel defences had been abstracted from a drawer, always kept locked in his absence, in his own writing-table in Pall Mall, the old War Office. The actual perpetrator of the theft was never discovered, but the Minister told me that he had no doubt about the plans having fallen into French hands. These foreign agents did not, however, always have matters their own way, for prepared documents were occasionally sold to them. This sort of thing was not much in our line ; it was not really worth the trouble, the best plan being to assume that the potential enemy kept everything up to date, and to adopt measures accordingly if this were possible. But foreigners are often imbued with the idea that something secret must necessarily be of great value to their respective countries.

In fact, my view always was—and experience has only tended to confirm it—that the results of secret service are usually negligible. Taking it all in all information acquired in this manner may indeed act as a kind of boomerang, and harm the recipients by making them lose their sense of proportion, or false news may be handed out. There was an instance of this shortly before 1914, when the Intelligence Division of the War Office employed a representative, at Hamburg, of a certain great brewery, to collect information about German projects and preparations. He found it an easy method of getting money, for he simply invented what he thought would be pleasing to his employers at the War Office in London.

A friend of mine, General Janin, commanding the Eighth French Army Corps at Bourges, was formerly military attaché at Berlin ; his secret service department was, no doubt, as efficient as it could be made, but he told me, in 1916, that no illicit military information of any real value was obtainable in Germany : the management was too efficient. Very important intelligence could be got by observation and logical reasoning, but not otherwise. Russia was different, but then it was safe to assume that

she would never be ready. Secretiveness there is innate, and generally means that the Russians have some defects to hide. General Moulin, for many years French Military Attaché at St. Petersburg, and a man of great experience in such matters, told me this. A new military invention, adopted by one Power, will quickly be equalled, if not improved upon, by others, while plans of mobilisation, one of the most important things of all, cannot be hidden, as regards their general outline, from enquiring minds. It does not follow, of course, that the knowledge so acquired will be acted upon.

The outbreak of hostilities in 1914 corroborates this view : this country was quite taken aback by the invasion of Belgium, but the only thing which could have prevented it would have been the prior incursion of the Allies into that land. A dozen years previously the Berlin *Militär-Wochenblatt*, the official German Army journal, had an article in which it was pointed out that the then war strength of the Kaiser's Army was so great—and it subsequently became much greater—that it could not operate efficiently in the Vosges region, hitherto the recognised line of advance against France. The reason for this was absolutely sound and incontrovertible : the number of possible roads was so small that the German forces could only act on a relatively narrow front ; this meant, of course, that their columns would be immensely long, so that troops debouching for battle could not, for days, perhaps weeks, bring up and make use of others too far in the rear.

The inference was surely clear : the German main advance must be through Belgium, with or without the consent of that country. One of our ablest military critics of to-day, General Sir Frederick Maurice, considered the best all-round work on the Great War to be that by Lieutenant-General von Moser : it is quite a small volume, but no publisher could be found here to issue a translation. The author states, on page 22, that Schlieffen's plan—to march through Belgium—which still held the field in 1914 was " broad-minded, clear, and simple," namely, " to outflank the French left, assumed to be ready in all respects,

and then roll up the whole of their front." Moser goes on to say that this scheme had become known to "almost the whole world," without any suggestion of treachery; it was obviously the only way, unless Germany was prepared to fight with one hand tied behind her back, and military necessities took precedence of ethics. The certain invasion of Belgium had either been overlooked or dismissed from account before the war came, but it had been reported by me to London several years previously.

A curious thing happened in 1891, after my return from Berlin. The question of improvements in horse and field artillery was exercising the minds of all great Powers, and of some smaller ones as well, but the quick-firing gun had not yet been introduced anywhere. Technical reasons and the cost had delayed their adoption, while the increased supplies of ammunition necessary with the change were another factor to be taken into account. Ministries of War did not, of course, publish useful information if they could help doing so, but a new weapon or cartridge, if adopted for general service, could not possibly remain a secret for any length of time.

Colonel More-Molyneux, our military attaché at St. Petersburg in 1891, an officer of the Indian Army, was asked whether the Russians had introduced "fixed ammunition"—meaning that cartridge and shell formed one unit—which would, of course, allow of much more rapid firing. His reply that they had done so a long time previously caused some misgivings in London; the Muscovite had apparently stolen a march on us. It occurred to somebody, however, to ask for further information on the subject, when it transpired that the attaché, knowing nothing about any artillery, had imagined the original question to be whether the actual patterns of cartridges and shells had been "fixed" for each kind of gun.

The year 1892 had barely dawned when one of the officers in the Intelligence Division was appointed to a post elsewhere, and, to my great gratification, the vacancy for a staff-captain, which followed, was given to me. I had had a sneaking hope that something of the kind might

happen before my temporary work ceased. I was at once seconded for five years and another captain appointed to my battery, while the goal, at which I had aimed after leaving the Staff College, some four years previously, had been attained, and, I am glad to say, without any private influence having been brought to bear.



### CHAPTER III

It happened that I remained for the time being with the Russian section, so the idea was broached that I should endeavour to obtain permission to attend the autumn manœuvres of the Imperial Guard and First Army Corps, near St. Petersburg, in the same year, 1892. The best chance seemed to lie in my paying a visit there and try to induce my former acquaintance, General Richter, still the Chief of the Emperor's Military Household, to intervene on my behalf. It would be a somewhat cool request to make, as foreign visitors were not much encouraged, and it was unlikely that the ambassador would see his way to help.

Nothing venture nothing have, so it was decided to make the attempt, and just about the same time—the early part of 1892—the post of military attaché to Her Majesty's embassy at St. Petersburg fell vacant. To my amazement my name was suggested by General Chapman, the Director of Military Intelligence, as the new incumbent of the office. My rank was that of a captain in the Army, while it had been usual for the appointment to be held by a full colonel ; in fact, this had invariably been the case as regards Russia.

I believe the Duke of Cambridge nearly had a fit when the proposal was laid before him. He would not consider it for one moment, and, although such preferment had always seemed to be far, far beyond my reach, a military attachéship—there were only six in those days—was the one appointment I longed for beyond all others. I had been thrown, all my life, much among foreigners, and, understanding them, could see things from their viewpoint.

It appeared difficult to find a full colonel sufficiently qualified, and the choice eventually fell on Colonel (afterwards General) Sir Montagu Gerard, an Indian cavalry officer who had been attached to the suite of

the Russian heir to the throne during his visit to India in 1891.

He was especially fond of society, and was considered to be something of a linguist. He had known the French language, having been educated partly in France, but long residence in the East had caused him to adopt numerous variations in that tongue which sometimes made it difficult even for a Frenchman to understand him; nevertheless he was, at least, extremely fluent both in French and in Russian, of which he had picked up a few words. St. Petersburg was to him, as to me, the most coveted post.

Some time would elapse before he would take up his appointment, and it was therefore decided that I should at once seek permission to attend the manoeuvres. According to the regulations then in force officers visiting St. Petersburg were ordered to inscribe their names on arrival in Sir Robert Morier's book, in order to acquaint His Excellency with the fact of their presence, and the rule was, of course, promptly complied with by me. Morier had had trouble with some of them, who had come to learn Russian—everybody wished to learn it then.

Having inscribed my name, my surprise was great when I received a very agreeable invitation to dine with Mr. Eliot, Sir Robert's right-hand man in the embassy. A most able diplomatist, he became Sir Charles Eliot, and was, until recently, our distinguished ambassador at Tokio. St. Petersburg was not a cheap place, and the prospect of an excellent dinner was an undeniable attraction in itself, but I wondered why Mr. Eliot should trouble to show such kindness to a mere acquaintance, whom he had only met once or twice some time previously. In fact, I could not help wondering all the time whether there was any powder in the jam, knowing Morier's views about stray officers. In the course of conversation as the evening wore on—I had not mentioned the object of my visit—Mr. Eliot suddenly asked me what my purpose was in coming to St. Petersburg. Somebody had once gone there in disguise, posing as a trader, and was detected immediately. My answer was that I had been expecting the question all the

evening and gave my reason. When he learned that it was something quite above-board—no officer would have dared then to visit the place otherwise, as Sir Robert's drastic methods were well known—my host said he thought His Excellency would like to see me on the morrow after church.

I called at the appointed hour, explained the object of my visit, and was treated in the kindest manner by the ambassador and Lady Morier, who invited me to luncheon, we three alone. There had been recently a scare, or, rather, a series of scares, in an influential morning newspaper, the *Standard*, to the effect that Russia was preparing for war in Europe. Sir Robert was not inclined to place any credence in the reports, but the London editor, Mr. Mudford, appeared to believe them, and the ambassador hated not knowing the basis of the allegations. Mudford's misfortune had been that he had lost his brilliant correspondent, Mr. J. F. Baddeley.

In the Intelligence Division it had been a mystery why the newspaper should have continued to hunt this hare with such vigour: the editor certainly had nothing from official sources to go upon, and I told His Excellency about my late journey in Russian Poland, and the grounds for it, of all of which he had been kept in ignorance! He went on to say that his own position was a difficult one, as he had had no military attaché for a considerable time, and did not know when the new one would arrive; it might be months hence.

It occurred to me instantly that I could help him, but, knowing his views about unattached officers in Russia, it was possible that, if a suggestion of assistance were made by me, he would, in his picturesque language—and it was always to the point—promptly damn me out of the country by the first train, and then good-bye to any manœuvres. Quaking inwardly, I made my offer, and awaited the explosion.

"Would you really? It would be extremely kind of you!" was the reply.

My delighted surprise made me gasp, but then it occurred to me that the work would require some weeks,

in order that His Excellency might become conversant with all necessary details, which would take this time to tabulate. On the other hand, my return to London was expected shortly. Morier, however, quickly disposed of this difficulty by saying that he would telegraph to London his intention to keep me for, at any rate, a time. This course was immediately agreed to by the War Office, and I commenced the work, my days and a good part of my nights also being devoted to it.

When everything was finished we went into the whole matter together and thoroughly, tearing the scares into shreds. The ambassador wrote a graphic despatch on the subject. Meanwhile, my own purpose had not been forgotten: one day Sir Robert said it might help me if he gave me a letter to General Richter telling of my wish about the manœuvres, and asking him to help, if he could. Of course this was of enormous assistance, because Morier held quite an extraordinary position at the Russian Court and in St. Petersburg society, a body small in numbers but very influential, and one which by no means always took kindly to foreigners. It was quite likely that, if I had approached General Richter without the ambassadorial backing, he would have said—quite truly—that the question was purely one for the military authorities, and there would have been an end of the matter. Fortified as I now was, however, the Chief of the Military Household promised to mention the request to the Emperor, and gave me good hopes of success.

All this time nobody could have been kinder than Sir Robert and Lady Morier were to me, and it was truly delightful—and a liberal education as well—to hear his lucid remarks on all kinds of subjects. A cablegram came at last to say that the military attaché, Colonel Gerard, would arrive in a few days' time, which he did.

Meanwhile a curious thing happened: the War Office, through the Foreign Office, asked whether His Excellency would be good enough to direct me to enter into communication with a Herr von Fritz, a German then in the Russian capital, who had approached London with a proposal to make portable shields proof against small



arms, and able to protect gunners against bullets and splinters ; indeed, he claimed also that they could be made useful for ships of war. I was to investigate and see what, if any, truth was contained in the inventor's claims.

It was easy enough to get into touch with the gentleman, whose name of Fritz was, as my knowledge of Germany told me, a *nom de plume*, but to investigate the invention in Russia was quite another matter. There was nowhere I could go, under the circumstances, for the purpose. My first interview with Fritz left me nothing definite to go upon ; the pseudo-nobleman—a very pleasant young man—was not disposed, as some of the War Office officials had seemed to imagine he would be, to give up his specifications on the chance of getting no reward or, at best, some indeterminate sum. He claimed to have carried out successful experiments in St. Petersburg, for which he had been paid, but negotiations had languished. He said he could not come to terms with the Russians, and added, what I knew to be true, that the Ministry of War was, at the moment, more exercised with the new magazine rifle.

The re-armament of the Russian infantry and cavalry with a magazine rifle of small calibre was still in process of being carried out, and the Roumanians, ever anxious to be in the forefront of technical military progress—for which they seemed to have plenty of money—were apparently going one better with an improved weapon. The new Russian rifle had alarmed some of the authorities in London ; India was, of course, always disturbed by fears of Russian aggression or trouble of some sort. It was estimated that the new issue would be completed in the year 1894 at latest, and then—so she and Captain Grierson were convinced—Russia would surely make war somewhere, while we were still more or less in the experimental stage. Our pattern had to be replaced by a better one after the struggle in South Africa several years later.

The reasoning of those in England, who were alarmed, was not very logical ; all continental Powers had been working on similar lines, and there appeared to be no particular motive why Russia should be a firebrand more

than any other country. Perhaps constant preoccupation with Russian affairs impregnated some of those at a distance with undue apprehensions ; nobody could say with certainty what might happen, but Sir Robert Morier, who took a comprehensive view, was not disturbed. Prospects of possible advantages, expediency, money, all these factors had to be considered and, after all, the Emperor Alexander III had hitherto shown himself quite manifestly to be a man of peace. Why should he be likely suddenly to turn brigand ?

Herr von Fritz, then, not finding what he wanted in Russia, had turned to England. He told me, of course, the essence of his invention, namely, specially prepared felt in which springs were enclosed. Without practical experiments it was not possible to form an opinion worth anything ; nevertheless, the idea seemed to have a good deal to commend it. The ambassador, who was much interested, discussed the question with me, and the conclusion was reached that the best thing to do was to send Fritz to England where trials could be carried out. At the worst the cost would only be his out-of-pocket expenses, for which an advance was to be made to him, while, if his claims should be sufficiently substantiated, he was to receive £1,000, and an agreement for further experiments would be drawn up.

The War Office ought, of course, to have been consulted before this arrangement was concluded, as it was being committed financially, but, as I explained to His Excellency, the project was sure to be vetoed on the score of expense. If, on the other hand, London were rushed into it, something of real value might be, so to say, forced upon the Department. Unless almost a miracle should result, wrath was likely in any event to be poured out on my head. The ambassador's and my part in the business was really that of pioneers, and, if we were a little ahead of our time, portable means of defence for troops in action were, as all the world knows, used universally in the Great War ; it was impossible to do without them.

Pioneers, of course, like everybody else, make mistakes at times. Years afterwards Count Zeppelin invited me

and my wife to attend the launch of his first real dirigible airship on Lake Constance in 1900. It was 330 feet in length, with an engine of 7 horse-power only, so that it could not carry more than two people, of whom one, the designer, was a big heavy man. Disaster—but not to life—ensued: a light breeze was too much for the machine, which became entangled in trees. Celebrated aeronauts from all parts of the world were present, and one of them said to me: “Well, this is the end of dirigibles.” I ventured to demur, as it was manifestly only a question of time, money, experiments and patience when the airship should establish its position very firmly indeed. Great numbers of extremely useful inventions have been evolved gradually from some simple notion, thought of, perhaps, by a layman: for instance, one would not have imagined that the idea of screw propulsion for ships would have come from a farmer’s brain.

The military attaché arrived a few days after the departure of friend Fritz for London, and the ambassador, in my presence, expressed to him his great satisfaction at meeting this fresh acquisition to his staff. British military agents formed part of an embassy personnel, and were under the Foreign Office. The system in vogue among continental Powers varied: with some it was similar to ours, while with others, the military attaché was independent of the ambassador. The Foreign Office had always refused firmly to change our plan, and, in my opinion, it was quite right.

With us all official despatches were addressed to His Excellency, and he, in his turn, forwarded them to the Foreign Office, whence they were sent promptly to the Intelligence Division. This caused no delay in practice, and an ambassador, or the Foreign Office, might wish to comment on the contents; this often happened, and the papers were almost always laid before the Foreign Secretary. The military attaché might write unofficially direct to his section of the Intelligence Division on matters of no interest to the world at large, while anything urgent was cabled by the ambassador.

The other system had great drawbacks, and offered no

counterbalancing benefit. It happened at times that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, or the Ministry of War of some particular country kept each other in the dark as regards the line of policy which one of them was pursuing. Austria and Russia are cases in point. Considerable trouble could, and did, sometimes result, while it happened occasionally, within my own knowledge, that a military agent criticised direct to his Chief of State the ambassadorial behaviour. The dual plan was also bound to prejudice harmonious politico-military co-operation.

Morier took the opportunity of expressing his wish to Colonel Gerard that he should not join the Yacht Club, a small and very select coterie in St. Petersburg, without first having obtained His Excellency's sanction. Some time previously the First Secretary of Embassy, Mr. (afterwards Sir Henry) Howard, a most eligible man in every respect, had been blackballed; there was nothing personal involved, it was merely a case of anglo-phobia directed against a diplomatist as such, and diplomatists were not regarded very favourably in that great military capital.

Colonel Gerard raised no objection, and it was just as well that he did not do so, but a former brother officer of his had told me that one of his peculiarities—and we all have our fads—was to run counter to any instructions of which he did not approve: if a new drill book, for example, contained something which did not appeal to him, he would disregard its precepts. In this instance the ambassador had put his wish in the form of a polite request, and, perhaps, the other did not understand that this intimation was merely the Foreign Office method of giving an order, whereas military departments were more bluff. Another friend of mine had told me also that three months would not elapse before there would be a clash of arms between the ambassador and his subordinate, when sparks would fly. This informant, however, was somewhat out in his reckoning: the explosion occurred in about three days over this very question of the club. Unfortunately my presence at the interview was not required on this occasion, but both sides told me about it afterwards,



and the undoubted result was that the laurels of victory fell to the ambassador, while his language this time showed the soldier quite a new and unsuspected side to His Excellency's character. A reconciliation was, happily, effected, and a new attaché was not therefore wanted.

There was nothing more for me to do at St. Petersburg, so I returned to London. Immediately after reporting myself for duty it was intimated to me that Mr. Stanhope, Secretary of State for War, had minuted the Fritz scheme, with his own fair hand, as "very unsatisfactory": some of the financial authorities had been, it appeared, most caustic. Furthermore, the Adjutant-General, Sir Redvers Buller, desired to see me as soon as possible. Hitherto we had never met, but everybody knew that he was apt to inspire delinquents with terror. On sending in my name I was received at once. Buller was standing by the window overlooking Pall Mall—in the old War Office where the Royal Automobile Club now stands—and, as he remained silent, I remarked politely :

"Good morning, sir."

"What the devil do you mean, sir, by committing the Government to an expenditure of more than a thousand pounds?" was his retort.

A convenient whipping-post was found in my person; of course, nothing could have been done without the approval of the ambassador, but I was not going to put the onus on to his shoulders, and nobody else dared to tackle him. As there was evidently more to come, it was best to wait until my interlocutor's ready flow of language had expended itself; never had such a dressing-down fallen to my lot, except, perhaps, once during my subaltern days. When he stopped I remarked that, if he would be kind enough to read the agreement, it would be seen that there was no question of the Government being committed to anything—save, possibly, some travelling expenses—unless a completely satisfactory bargain should be concluded.

"Oh," said the Adjutant-General, "I knew it was all right, and that you would give a satisfactory explanation; I told the Secretary of State so!"

He was always very nice to me afterwards. If his

phraseology had frightened me, perdition would have been my lot. The Foreign Office did not trouble to ask the War Office to pay the out-of-pocket expenses, but, as the Permanent Under-Secretary informed me, put them down as "a splash of Morier's." They came out of the Secret Service fund, a very small one in those days, but sufficient for the purpose. Up to a short time previously it had been the custom for the Government of the day to sequester it for political party purposes, but this practice had to be abandoned when the public somehow got to know of it.

The experiments themselves had undoubtedly a measure of success, but the financial authorities wanted to get out of the agreement whatever its merits. Certainly the inventor did not substantiate all his claims, but there was a good deal in them. He asked for more time, but this was refused, and he was told the negotiations were at an end. Fritz demurred strongly to this, and threatened legal proceedings, but his means were insufficient for the purpose. He laid the matter before the editor of a London evening newspaper, the *Star*, who published a summary of it, but it was no "scoop," and the affair was quickly forgotten.

In later years it happened occasionally that the question of conferring decorations on foreign officers came within my purview, but Fritz was the first person who taught me how much these adornments are prized both on the continent of Europe and in the United States as well. When I saw him in London, before any experiments had been carried out, he said he would far sooner have an English decoration than the thousand pounds : he had some foreign ones. He did not really credit me when I explained that a distinction of this nature was very closely hedged round ; in fact, there were then only the Bath, and St. Michael and St. George, as the Garter, St. Patrick and the Thistle were practically reserved for influential peers, who might or might not be men of ability. In order, at last, to impress him with the difference between our system and that in vogue on the Continent, I remarked that I had recently been at Hawarden, when Mrs. Gladstone showed me a treasure table. On it was the nearest approach to a decoration which her great husband possessed, namely, a

small, enamelled *plaque* presented to him by grateful Bulgaria after his efforts on her behalf.

Matters now resumed their normal course at the Intelligence Division, and the *magnum opus*, the report on Finland, was ready for issue. I fear, and am indeed certain, that its merit was not equal to its cost; confidential printing, especially, was very expensive.

Time passed pleasantly away until, one day, a telegram came to say that the Emperor of Russia had been graciously pleased to sanction my attendance at the manœuvres near St. Petersburg in the following August. This was very satisfactory. There was a hitch at the last moment after my arrival in the capital: the horse on which I had counted was, unfortunately, no longer available, and to have been on foot would have cramped one's style. My difficulty was laid before the Chief of the Military Household, General Richter, with the surprising result that I was invited to join the military attachés, was given a room, a horse from the Imperial stables, and lunched daily with the Emperor and other members of his family! Fortune again stood my friend. On August 18th it was customary for the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, together with the members of his diplomatic staff, to be invited to luncheon at Krasnoe Selo, the camp Head-quarters, as it was the anniversary of the birth of the Emperor Francis Joseph. Relations between the two dynasties had formerly been somewhat intimate, and, although diplomacy had caused a change to occur, the annual celebration continued to be observed.

Like all manœuvres there was an element of make-believe in these Russian ones, but they were naturally very interesting for me as giving an insight into a good many things not to be learned from books. I was much struck with the really extraordinary capacity of the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevich—afterwards Commander-in-Chief in 1914. He was a born cavalryman; probably he never troubled himself with drill books, but I have seen him keep some six thousand cavalry on the move for a couple of hours on end, without the slightest hitch occurring, when his subordinates were not exactly gifted tacticians.

It may have been this rare quality—the ground was truly a very restricted one—which led some observers to endow him with talents as a strategist which events showed that he did not possess. The Russian Grand Dukes all held high positions in the army or navy, and their capacity was, perhaps, up to the average, but not beyond it.

The unexpected and gracious hospitality extended to me by the Emperor of Russia brought vividly to my mind the difference between Courts: after I had joined the War Office in 1891, and before this visit to Russia in 1892, the German Emperor, William II, had paid a visit to Queen Victoria at Windsor, accompanied by his suite. Just at the time of his stay a great review of volunteers—in which the public took enormous interest—was to be held at Wimbledon, and the military members of the Imperial suite were naturally anxious to attend it. When the suggestion was made to Windsor that they should stay about twenty-four hours longer for the purpose, it was intimated to the War Office that the visit was for four days, after which the Court could do nothing more. As a matter of fact matters were then arranged by the War Office so that all was well, but the Emperor had not intended to stay for the function. Things were different in King Edward's time.

His Majesty received the various foreign visitors, who had arrived in order to attend the funeral of Queen Victoria in 1901, at Windsor Castle in the afternoon of the day, when the obsequies were over. The number of these foreign military and diplomatic delegates was very large, and it was getting late when my turn came to present the German officers, who were in my charge. The ceremonial was necessarily as brief as possible, but these gentlemen were very anxious to see something of London. In other words, they desired that their official visit should be prolonged for some days for this purpose. The only possible thing to be done was for me to lay the matter before the King immediately after completing my presentations, as the guests were due to leave London on the following day. It was an awkward situation; the hour was late,



there was still a crowd of people to be presented, and His Majesty must have been greatly fatigued by his strenuous labours of several days past, especially those of February 2nd, the day of the funeral. In fact, by interrupting the proceedings at Windsor I would lay myself open to a well-deserved snub. When I decided to take my only chance the official in charge of the next delegation must have been surprised when I put forward my request.

After I had explained the situation briefly His Majesty said :

“ By all means : make every arrangement for them to stay as long as they wish, and tell the Lord Chamberlain that I said so ! ”

On my return to the Intelligence Division from the Russian manœuvres I was transferred to the section which dealt with Spain, Egypt, Morocco, and some other places, and my geographical knowledge improved greatly in consequence. Matters generally remained quiet in the official world during the remainder of the year 1892, but a little excitement was aroused in some quarters by the news that Spain had ordered, and paid for, a six-inch gun of the most modern type, manufactured by Krupp. It appeared that it was to be placed in a position whence it could shell Gibraltar, and even expel us from that stronghold if we should refuse to depart quietly. The whole proceeding had been kept as secret as possible, but you cannot make a big gun invisible, besides which, it out-ranged all our weapons.

Another item of news was really very important, and by no means of academic significance : it related to the steps taken by General Sir R. Wingate—then a junior officer in charge of the Intelligence Department of the Egyptian Army—for the escape of Slatin Pasha from his protracted duress in the hands of the Dervishes. Anybody at all conversant with Orientals is aware how extraordinarily difficult it is to lay a solid foundation for a scheme of this nature, and the architect must be possessed of very unusual gifts to enable him not only to prepare the way, but—what is infinitely more hazardous—to carry out the plan to a successful conclusion. Wingate's efforts pre-

vailed in the end, a wonderful piece of work, which required years of unremitting patience and labour.

The information, which the fugitive related about his very shrewd captors, was of great value in furthering the plans for our subsequent progress, culminating in the Battle of Omdurman. No romance was more thrilling than the news, which we got in advance, of the future Sirdar's projects in planning the escape.

My impressions regarding the value of secret service in Europe have been already given, and they may be accentuated by an incident which occurred in 1892; it might be termed *The Indiscretions of the Great*, which may easily frustrate the secretive labours of their subordinates. A Naval and Military Committee, composed of officers of high rank, had been appointed by the Government of the day—the Unionists were in office—to consider the feasibility or otherwise of a naval attack on the Dardanelles in case the Turks should refuse to allow us free ingress if we happened to be at war with Russia.

The Committee considered the problem from various angles, and came to the unanimous conclusion that it would be suicidal to attempt to force the entrance to the Straits—which were not then so effectively defended as they were in 1915—by ships of war alone.

Six copies of the Report were printed with the utmost secrecy. One was given to Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, while the remaining five were distributed to the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Secretary of State for War, Mr. Arthur Balfour, the Intelligence Division of the Admiralty, and the Intelligence Division of the War Office.

One morning I was surprised when I was told to go and collect all the copies, which were to be burnt, and I started off on my errand by asking Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson, principal Private Secretary to Mr. Stanhope at the War Office, for his copy. He was very nice to me personally, but criticised my request sharply. He explained that he was the proper person to deal with the Minister's documents, and that, in any case, the Report could not be found at the moment, as Mr. Stanhope was already packing

up his papers because the Government knew they would shortly afterwards be turned out of office.

When Lord Salisbury was asked for his copy he said he had some dim recollection of having seen it, and rather thought he had left it in the pocket of an old coat, which he had given to a gardener. Mr. Balfour had no idea as to what had become of his paper, and the First Lord of the Admiralty said a search should be made for his. What became of the four missing documents was never known! They would have been interesting to Russia and to Turkey, and I could cite another similar instance, which does not belong to these pages, as it concerned Germany. A Cabinet Minister left behind in his hotel during a visit to Berlin a highly confidential War Office document, which threw a considerable amount of light on that Department's system of administration. This was when I was military attaché at Berlin. It was a fortnight before the Prussian War Office returned it to me, nor had it apparently been missed in London!

In the early part of the year 1893 there were rumours in London that Colonel Gerard wished to resign his post at St. Petersburg; it was an open secret that he did not get on very well with Sir Robert Morier; on the other hand, the post in Russia appealed to him. As the weeks passed Rumour showed for once that she was not a lying jade, but, being no longer in the Russian section of the Intelligence Division, nothing came to my ears about the new selection, and I went away on leave. Shortly afterwards a telegram came from the War Office desiring me to call upon the Deputy Adjutant-General of the Royal Artillery. This was the late Major-General Sir Albert Williams, who had inspected me and my battery at Ipswich before I went to London; he was a very smart and distinguished officer.

No notion as to the reason for the telegram came into my head: it could have nothing to do with St. Petersburg, because my rank was that of a comparatively junior major in the artillery, my promotion having come a few months previously, and the Duke of Cambridge insisted on a more senior man for such an appointment. On

presenting myself to the Deputy Adjutant-General, he said there was some question of my becoming the new military attaché, but he added that several candidates, all higher in grade than myself, were also in the running. However, the Military Secretary to His Royal Highness, General Sir Reginald Gipps—a Guardsman—wished to see me, and military patronage lay in his vigorous hands. We had never hitherto met, and, when I entered his room, he said :

“ I hear you are an applicant for the post of military attaché at St. Petersburg.”

“ No, sir,” I replied, “ I have never applied for the appointment, but would, of course, be delighted to get it.”

“ Well,” answered the Military Secretary, “ I don’t think there is the slightest chance of your being selected. Good afternoon.”

This was not really very disappointing, as the Duke’s views were well known, and, being a Royal personage, with a rich command of language, he had advantages in the matter of patronage which were denied to his successors, as Lord Wolseley told me once.

The remainder of my leave had not expired when, a fortnight or so later, a personal letter reached me from the Intelligence Division which informed me, to my amazement, that I had been selected for St. Petersburg, as Lord Rosebery, the Foreign Secretary, refused to forward any other name to the Queen! As military attachés were soldiers, the procedure was for the War Office to nominate somebody for these posts, and the Foreign Office passed the proposal on to Her Majesty, as those officers then came under its orders. Never having met Lord Rosebery—for whom I had always had a great admiration as a statesman and supporter of the Turf—it occurred to me that Sir Robert Morier must have asked for me. Obviously the first thing to be done was to go hot foot to London, and enquire whether his lordship would care to receive me.

Being admitted to his presence almost immediately, my extraordinary lack of manners ought to have impressed



him, before I uttered a word, with my entire unfitness for the new appointment. On entering his room he greeted me in the kindest manner, and began to draw up an immense arm-chair close to his writing-table for me. The fact is that this act of condescension had taken me entirely aback. In those days, at any rate, a major would not have been given the chance of a seat when being interviewed by an officer senior in rank but of infinitely less importance than a powerful Cabinet Minister. Those who have been in that splendid room of the Foreign Secretary's will appreciate the situation when his lordship was moving the great chair across a considerable distance, while the embryo military attaché, who should have been a model of courtliness as well as tact, stood gaping without offering even to assist! Lord Rosebery, however, has a wonderful knowledge of human nature; this, together with his very remarkable tact, made him, no doubt, feel that sheer astonishment and shyness were the cause of my ill-mannered blunder, especially as I was the younger of the two. When I recovered myself I thanked him whole-heartedly for his great and totally unexpected kindness in having selected me. He replied:

"I am very glad that you like the post, but you must thank Morier and not me, for it is on his representations that you have been chosen."

Sir Robert told me afterwards that, when the matter was settled, Lord Rosebery had written to him to say that he had defeated the whole British Army, headed by the Duke of Cambridge! The ambassador had applied for me, it appeared, when the vacancy arose, and had countered the inevitable objections by observing that he had been for eight years Her Majesty's representative in St. Petersburg, and thought that he might, for once, be permitted to have a voice in the matter. Whether he expressed himself actually in these terms is unknown to me, but, at any rate, he got his own way. He had never forgotten my attempt to help him about a year previously, but had said nothing to me about it.

After a very pleasant interview with Lord Rosebery it occurred to me that it would be politic to go over to the

War Office, and thank the Military Secretary for having, after all, chosen me ! On being admitted to his presence I was warm in my acknowledgments, but then came a horrid shock.

“ All I can say is,” replied the great man, “ that I know nothing whatever about you having been appointed to St. Petersburg ! ”

I ventured to remark that the Foreign Office had given me to understand that the choice had fallen upon me, to which he answered :

“ One never knows anything here for certain ; that door there may be opened, and I will be told that some appointment, made by His Royal Highness, has been cancelled. That’s all I know ; good afternoon.”

The military atmosphere certainly felt sultry, and there was evidently a misunderstanding somewhere, so I quickly retraced my steps to the Foreign Office, where the chief Private Secretary, Mr. (afterwards Sir Francis) Villiers, received me. On explaining what had happened over the way he said the War Office was quite wrong ; that, in order to get the matter settled promptly, the Foreign Office had asked the Queen’s Private Secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, to telegraph—Her Majesty was in France—approval on receipt of the nomination. This had been done, and the written sanction, which he showed me, had also just arrived, endorsed “ Appd. V.R. & I.” There was no possible doubt about this, and we were discussing the best manner in which to explain the case to Pall Mall, when it suddenly occurred to my companion to enquire whether official notification had been sent to the War Office. It had not !

This was directed to be despatched immediately, and, after giving it time to reach its destination, I re-visited Sir Reginald Gipps. On this occasion he was most affable ; took the trouble to explain that there had been nothing against me personally, and was always very kind and appreciative during the remainder of his tenure of office. An officer in his position—it was far more important then than it became when the post of Commander-in-Chief was abolished in 1904—was in possession of all kinds of

secrets, and the holder of the post was usually gifted with the qualities desired.

It might, indeed, happen very occasionally that even a Military Secretary could say the wrong thing. On one occasion, in later years, the Military Secretary of the day, General Sir Roland Lane, was talking to me about an appointment which had become vacant—it had nothing whatever to do with me—and the delay in filling it was unusually long; at least the announcement was a long time in coming. My private information, from an officer—X—was that the War Office had told him he was selected, and could make his arrangements accordingly, but a still higher authority had already informed me that Y and not X would be the fortunate man. On my mentioning that this officer had a disappointment in store, the Military Secretary said :

“ You may take it from me that there was never any question of his being selected.”

“ Well,” I remarked, “ you have forgotten that the name Y has been substituted for that of X.”

It was on that occasion only, no doubt, that my companion, being quite unexpectedly caught out, blushed a rosy red, a most unusual thing for a dispenser of military patronage.

Another time I witnessed an exchange of repartee between a Military Secretary of a different stamp and a visitor, who was enquiring about his prospects. They were engaged in quite friendly conversation when the M.S. misunderstanding something the other had said about his career in a jocular sense, and wishing to get rid of his caller, said :

“ Your career is nothing to me—nothing.”

“ Ah,” replied the other, “ I thought the taxpayers, of whom I am one, paid you to look after the interests of officers; good afternoon.”

Taking up his hat he walked to the door, but, before he reached it, the other, sorry for his tart remark, said :

“ Well, I will see what can be done; let us talk it over.”

“ No, thank you,” was the answer; “ we both understand each other.”

The great man, however, had his own troubles about his career afterwards when he went to Gallipoli, where things did not work out according to plan.

It was intimated to me that the ambassador desired me to join his staff as soon as possible, so I took this hint at the military *pied de la lettre*, and arranged to start in a few days' time. What His Excellency really meant was that my departure from London should not be delayed for some months : this was the difference between Foreign Office and War Office methods : an order issued by the latter was naturally expected to be carried out as soon as possible. In any case it was advisable for me to take up my new appointment at once, and to get firmly seated in the saddle ; the Military Secretary's remark about the "open door" was at the back of my mind ! All that remained for me to do was to ask whether the Duke of Cambridge would wish to see me and, finding that he certainly did, I was conducted to the royal presence.

His room at the old War Office—or Horse Guards as he loved to call his own domain, which he invariably entered by a side door from Pall Mall, instead of by the grand entrance used by the Secretary of State and lesser lights—was very large, and overlooked St. James's Park. There was a screen just inside the door to keep off draughts, and His Royal Highness's Assistant Military Secretary, preceding me, piloted me round the obstacle. As soon as we stood in the clear he announced :

"This is Major Waters, sir, who is going to St. Petersburg."

"What's that ?" roared His Royal Highness, who had not heard distinctly.

Lane repeated what he had just said, but in a louder tone.

"I know that. Damn you, get out !" was the reply, and my companion retired in good order : he knew the Duke's ways well !

I then advanced without support or reserve to the Commander-in-Chief's writing-table, wondering somewhat what my reception would be. There was cause for speculation on this point, not only because a major had



been selected in opposition to the royal wishes, but also for the reason that the nomination of somebody else had gone forth originally to the Foreign Office in the most official and formal manner. My information in this instance was excellent: being still on the staff of the War Office, it had occurred to me to peruse all the correspondence, and it was both interesting and amusing. The minute, eulogising the other nominee, had been pasted over, and another laudatory one, suggesting me as a very proper person, written over it. Both memoranda were legible.

The dear old Duke was quite charming; I had only met him once previously after joining the War Office permanently, when he was also very nice. I had, however, heard him on parade; indeed, on one occasion, during my subaltern days, the royal wrath had been poured lavishly on my head. In the present instance nothing could have been kinder than his manner, and, after a very interesting conversation, he wished me luck in my new post and told me to write to him regularly. I always went to see him when in England, and my strong impression, founded on personal intercourse, was and still is that he had a great deal more acumen than his critics gave him credit for.

Some time afterwards the authorities in India became very uneasy again about Russian projects, and I happened to be with the Duke who had received, on that morning, a letter from Sir George White, the Commander-in-Chief in India, advocating the construction of military roads through, perhaps, the most mountainous part of all our mountainous frontier. Apart from the question of cost, His Royal Highness asked for my opinion without giving me any inkling as to his own views, beyond saying that the arguments adduced in the letter were very cogent. It seemed to me that, assuming Russia to be a potential brigand, a road when made might be equally useful to her, and he quite agreed. The fact is that he did not think war was imminent merely because the possibility of it had to be considered. He had really a broad outlook; he heard everything that was going on in the great world,

whereas soldiers were apt sometimes to look at things from one angle only. Of course, there were exceptions: Lord Wolseley was, it may be fairly said, the greatest brain that our army has possessed for many generations, although Fortune did not give him an opportunity on a grand scale of demonstrating this fact. Neither he nor the Duke liked change for the sake of change, and His Royal Highness weighed the various factors of a case carefully before deciding that an innovation was desirable for the public service. Officers as a body certainly had confidence in him, which is more than can be said for some of his successors in high office.

My departure for St. Petersburg followed immediately after my reception by the Commander-in-Chief. On my way through Berlin I met an old acquaintance, the late Colonel Repington, a very clever man, who was visiting Germany in order to acquire some first-hand knowledge of her army, which was, he understood, as near perfection as anything of the kind could be. The sequel showed how great events may spring from trifling causes.

My compatriot had been received with most hospitable cordiality, which involved a good deal of beer drinking. This liquid did not agree with him, and induced him to take a violent dislike to all things German. Blinded by his feelings, and attaining afterwards a very eminent literary position, he could see no virtue in the mighty German Army, beyond the fact that it was, as a parade machine, super-excellent. As time passed and the political situation in Europe presaged war at no distant date, Repington published a long and weighty article, about a twelvemonth before August 1914, in which he declared that the German Army could by no possibility endure a campaign for more than about six months, because the physique of its beer-drinking officers would not be able to stand the strain for any length of time.

His opinion of the French Army was that it was the best-trained and administered of any in the world. These views, backed by General Sir James Grierson, an influential former friend and subsequent bitter foe of Germany—for personal reasons—carried immense weight with our

statesmen, and we all remember how the country was encouraged by them to believe in complete victory certainly within half a year and possibly in much less. The methods of those great statesmen—or near-great as some of them were—may fairly be criticised adversely, but one can scarcely blame them for the belief engendered by those to whose opinions they were accustomed to attach great weight. If the Germans had been “dry,” when Repington was with them in 1893, events might conceivably have taken a very different turn !

Sir Robert Morier received me with the greatest kindness on my arrival at St. Petersburg. It was fortunate for me that my departure from London had not been delayed longer, for His Excellency was leaving on the following night for the Crimea for change of air, and did not return for some weeks. Short as the time was, however, it sufficed to teach me quite a number of things most useful to me later.

The retiring military attaché, Colonel Gerard, had waited for me, and mentioned that, on a certain date, he had applied to withdraw his resignation, but had been told from London that his successor was already appointed. This was not the case : when that application went in nobody had been approved by the Foreign Office, and the ambassador had been asked whether this way out of the impasse would be agreeable to him. My colleague remained unaware that the reply was a trenchant negative couched, I understood, in Morier’s own matchless language.

## CHAPTER IV

OFFICIAL calls upon various Russians of high degree and members of the diplomatic body were my first task. In most cases this consisted merely in leaving cards, which the recipients acknowledged in the same manner ; otherwise there would have been no end to the business, which occupied nevertheless a respectable amount of time. At Easter and New Year cards had to be left on all friends as well as officials ! People in England, unfamiliar with foreign methods, have no idea of this social burden : cards should be left immediately after being introduced to new acquaintances. A fellow-countryman came to St. Petersburg for a visit, was presented to many men of standing, left his cards—duly acknowledged—and was, for a moment, under the impression that he was fairly launched in St. Petersburg society. But nothing happened ; it was all a formula without meaning, just like those of post-war Conferences.

Society in St. Petersburg did not rush to embrace either foreigners or its own compatriots unless the latter had some special claims of blood or friendship. In April 1893 my acquaintance with it was practically nil, having, on former occasions, merely been introduced to some of its male members. Court circles and society were two different things : you might belong to the former while being excluded from the latter small body. Nor did high descent and great possessions of themselves permit an individual to be received at Court. It might, and often did, happen that a man of very humble parentage managed to enter the public service, military or civil, and then rose to higher positions until he had the right to be invited to certain Court functions, from which the heir of a family much older than the Romanovs would be excluded as not having sufficiently senior official rank. This system of



"tchin" permeated everything : on one occasion, in my earlier days at St. Petersburg, I paid a call on a well-known lawyer and enquired whether he was at home. "His Excellency the General is away for some days," was the reply. His standing at the bar ranked him with a major-general, and everybody of that rank, as well as their daughters, were thereby entitled to the prefix of Excellency, a title which, with us, is awarded very sparingly. For instance, an ambassador has it, but not a minister in charge of a legation. The reason is that the former is the personal representative of his Chief of Staff, whereas the latter personates his Government.

The principal officials, who received me personally after my arrival, were the Minister of War, the Chief of the General Staff, and the acting Foreign Minister, besides a host of others. The Minister of War, General Vannovsky, of Polish descent, was most affable, and expressed the hope that my stay would be a prolonged one. This remark had, no doubt, reference to the fact that, for various reasons, our military attachés at St. Petersburg, although appointed in the first instance for five years, had not completed their time there. The Chief of the General Staff, General Obruchev, was just about civil, and no more ; he disliked the British, and besides, the Russians were already becoming more intimate with the French. The Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Shishkin—with whom, of course, I would have no official relations—received me out of my turn, intending, as he succeeded in doing, to annoy the representative of Portugal ! The latter told me he had been waiting some time, before my arrival on the scene, for an interview. Pinpricks, levelled by or at diplomatists, were not, however, confined to Russia, as the following incident, which was said to have congested temporarily the cable traffic, will show.

I do not know what M. Shishkin had against Portugal, but in 1907 I was in command of the British troops of occupation in North China, the idea being to ensure payment of the Boxer indemnity.

As we were no longer at war with China it was usual for a new foreign commander to be presented to the

Dowager Empress, the real ruler. That most able man, Sir John Jordan, was the British Minister at Peking, and he asked me about a date for my presentation. It occurred to me that, as he had always an enormous amount of work to handle, it would be most convenient if my attendance should coincide with one of his periodical visits to Court, and so save him one extra journey at any rate. It was therefore arranged that my presentation should take place on the occasion of the approaching Chinese New Year in February 1907, when the whole of the diplomatic body at Peking—a somewhat mixed force—would go to the Palace to congratulate the Empress on the occasion of the anniversary. China is—or was—the one country where ceremonial and courtesy have been developed to their extreme limits, while, at the same time, the skill of the Chinese in making an unpalatable thrust in an unanswerable manner has probably never been equalled.

On the morning of February 24th, 1907, all the diplomatic body in Peking was assembled in the audience chamber of the Winter Palace in the Forbidden City, whither we had been conveyed in sedan chairs. The Dowager Empress was seated behind a small table on a large dais, while the legitimate ruler, the young Emperor, was on a stool on her left but one step lower. Her Majesty, a tiny lady, very simply dressed, had the most piercing black eyes I have ever seen, while the Mandarins were gorgeously attired.

The Legations, standing in order of seniority, bowed, and then Mr. Rockhill—the *doyen*, the United States Minister and a majestic figure, a Trinity in fact—delivered a lengthy oration in French, of which the gist was the great and disinterested affection which all other countries had for China and for Her Majesty, whose increasing prosperity was their one great desire. The Empress, who had been obliged, on two previous occasions, to fly for her life from foreign soldiery out of that very palace, listened with the utmost gravity and motionless.

At either end of the dais was a short, uncarpeted flight of steps; when the brief reply of the Empress to Mr.

Rockhill's speech had been translated by the Grand Chamberlain, the next stage in the reception was reached. There was a third flight of steps, directly in the centre of the dais and covered with scarlet cloth, but they were reserved for Royalty, no common mortal might use them. The United States Minister then ascended the steps on Her Majesty's left, halted in front of her, bowed, passed on and down the other flight. He was then shepherded to a luncheon room, and each Minister followed the same procedure. Their staffs did not ascend the dais.

Sir John Jordan and his secretaries remained behind for my presentation. To our general astonishment the Grand Chamberlain came and announced that I was to use the Imperial steps, scarlet cloth and all, whereupon Mr. Campbell, the "Chinese" secretary, said to Sir John :

"This will never do, sir ; for twenty-two years have I been at this legation, and such a thing has never been heard of !"

It occurred to me to point out that we were not in Mr. Campbell's house but in the Imperial Palace, and up the scarlet steps I went, leaving poor Mr. Campbell much upset. The Emperor, who had hitherto sat expressionless, smiled at me—perhaps he saw the humour of the situation. The Empress also made a considerable amount of conversation—a very easy thing with Chinese. I was then likewise conducted to the luncheon room ; the foreign Ministers were placed at the top cross-table in state, whither an official conducted me also. My efforts to enter into friendly chatter were very much discouraged, for the magnates refused to talk to one who, however innocently, had made diplomacy the recipient of a terrific snub. They all—except Sir John Jordan, who was heartily amused—looked as black as thunder. They imagined, apparently, that the whole thing had been arranged previously between the Empress and myself, but the luncheon was excellent.

The reason for the wonderful stage management was simple : while accepting very politely Mr. Rockhill's affectionate asseverations, nobody knew better than she did the shameless rapacity of foreign Governments in extorting concessions. England endeavoured to emulate

other countries in this respect, but the Empress was well aware that Sir John Jordan was a true friend of China : while obliged to carry out his instructions from home he managed, nevertheless, to do a vast amount of good in restricting or thwarting the greed of exploiters. Jordan told me that we spent large sums on official telegrams intended to bolster up concession-mongers. The disease had been very virulent just before my presentation to the Empress ; Her Majesty could not, of course, differentiate between one foreign Minister and another, but nearly every great Power had been causing her a lot of trouble.

My audience was therefore a heaven-sent opportunity to show conspicuous favour to a soldier in occupation of Chinese territory, but disinterested and on excellent terms with her people. She must also have been aware that, when her Viceroy called upon me at my Head-quarters in Tientsin, a Guard of Honour with band and colour was always furnished by my orders, an unusual mark of courtesy which was appreciated very greatly.

Thus I became the vicarious recipient of an extraordinary favour which was really intended, of course, for Sir John Jordan, who, indeed, most thoroughly deserved it. He told me, after we had returned to the British Legation, that the submarine cables would, no doubt, be humming with traffic in consequence of what had occurred at the Palace. I heard afterwards, from an unimpeachable source, that the cable staff had been much surprised, as well as annoyed, at the sudden rush of numerous and very lengthy official cablegrams in cypher for despatch, on a Sunday afternoon, to various Foreign Offices in the world, as things all seemed quiet in the capital.

The Chinese Mandarin interpreters were perfect : it was the easiest thing possible to meet—say—a Viceroy for the first time, and to converse without a hitch for an hour or so on all sorts of subjects. Once I took an American friend of mine, Dr. Gatrell, to an interview ; he lived in Peking and was a first-rate Chinese scholar. The question between the Viceroy, Yuan-Shi-Kai, and myself was a somewhat delicate one : a Chinese workman, employed by



the Army Service Corps, had struck a Chinese magistrate in the native city, whose authorities wished to deal with the case. As we were not in British territory, every individual in our service was under the sole jurisdiction of the British commander for civil and military offences. Gatrell told me afterwards that the interpreter had been absolutely accurate throughout, whereas I have known interpreters during the Great War make grave mistakes.

It is time, however, to put a period to these digressions and to return to St. Petersburg. Things move slowly in Russia, although several years were to elapse before this fact was appreciated in other countries. The Russian Army would evidently not be re-armed by the date originally estimated by London and India, but some thousands of the new rifles had been despatched to Asiatic territory together with the smokeless powder. There was nothing alarming in this : the Army had to have one type of weapon for general service, and the climatic conditions in Siberia and Central Asia made it imperative to ascertain whether the new one was reliable everywhere. The idea in India, like that of Captain (afterwards General Sir James) Grierson was still that, on the re-armament being completed, Russia would force on a war, very likely with England. Some time elapsed before a calmer view prevailed ; fortunately people in high office in London took a broader view.

In April 1893 the German Military Attaché was Captain Lauenstein of the Great General Staff ; he was a native of Hanover, and, like myself, an artilleryman by profession. In the British Army, at that time, the officers of the Royal Regiment did not obtain staff employment in proportion—or anything like it—to their numbers, whereas, in the great continental armies, they had rather more than their full share. Lauenstein was a capital fellow, and more will be said about him later.

It was not necessary, of course, to go to Russia to learn that a society, which was permitted only a very severely censored Press, must be a hotbed of gossip of all kinds, even among those who should know better, and I had only occupied my post for eleven days when quite a sensation was caused by the definite report that General Vannovsky,

the Minister of War, had been summoned unexpectedly to Livadia, in the Crimea, where the Emperor was then residing ; His Excellency had been seen to start on April 27th, and rumour was rife as to the cause, the balance of opinion inclining to the belief that Russia was about to issue an ultimatum to Bulgaria, threatening her with dire penalties if Prince Ferdinand should declare himself to be an independent sovereign. This would, it was argued, entail a European conflagration. One lady of St. Petersburg society, Princess Ourusov, was somewhat annoyed when I told her that the report might not be true, and, certainly, her evidence seemed, on the face of it, to be unanswerable. Now the journey to Livadia occupied somewhere about three days, and it was impossible that Vannovsky should have left the capital on the date mentioned, because I had seen him to speak to on the day prior to his alleged departure, and had an appointment with him for Saturday morning, April 29th.

These ladies of St. Petersburg had to talk about something ; foreign, especially English, newspapers were not unusual, but unfortunately real items of interest were often blacked out by the censorship. For those who were curious enough to learn what had been "caviared" there were no real difficulties : either they could obtain the journal in question from a member of the British Embassy, or else they could write to England, and have the offending paragraphs cut out and sent by letter post, the chances being that the particular envelope would not be opened by the secret police. A very few people were allowed to have their newspapers from abroad delivered uncensored, while foreign diplomatists suffered, of course, no interference.

The Court at St. Petersburg was essentially a military one ; this is not surprising when it is remembered that every post in the civil service was the equivalent of some military commissioned grade ; another reason for the precedence and advantages accorded to officers was the inherent dislike or mistrust of diplomacy, although Russians themselves were no mean adepts in this art. The difference between the two careers was marked, in one way, by an important privilege granted to military attachés, who were

permitted to import anything they wanted from abroad free of duty.

The Russian tariff was, generally speaking, enormously high, and certain articles were rated as if consisting wholly of their most highly taxed parts ; for instance, a silk dress with gold embroidery would be charged as if it were made entirely of the latter substance, on which the rate was higher than on silk. Times change, and we are now imitating Russia.

On first arriving in the country a military attaché was granted a customs credit of 3,000 gold roubles for his outfit, and another one of 1,000 roubles for anything else. When this latter was worked out all he had to do was to ask for another credit of similar amount, and so on *ad infinitum*. Ambassadors and Ministers were treated in the same manner, but the members of their staffs were only granted a very moderate sum, quite small even for a counsellor of embassy, and there was no renewal. The late Sir Edward Goschen, when chargé d'affaires at St. Petersburg, asked me once—I was a bachelor then—to import a gold-embroidered silk dress for his wife, and the Customs never thought of querying my import.

It will give some idea of the absolutely impossible mass of detail with which the Emperor had to deal, when it is stated that even a military attaché's customs credit had to be submitted to His Majesty for formal approval, and initialled by him. The idea really was to prevent speculation and corruption, but it is obvious that no ruler could, under the Russian system, have much chance of getting at the truth except by the aid of great good luck.

On one occasion I wanted to give a present to a Russian lady, whose family had been remarkably kind to me, so I asked her what she would really like to have. The answer was that a particular kind of perambulator, largely advertised in the London newspapers, would be a joy for ever. One was therefore ordered, and we wondered whether the Customs Department, which was well aware that the importer was unmarried, would query the invoice, and ask me to pay the duty, but no question was raised : it was all taken as a matter of course.

The necessity for men in St. Petersburg society to have some official as distinct from their personal rank led to the anomaly that certain favoured regiments of the Imperial Guard had a strength of about double the establishment of officers, thus solving the difficulty. It pleased the mothers of the gilded youths, as their boys had not to submit to the derogatory position of an officer in a regiment of the line. As men rose in rank—in the Guards an officer jumped from captain to full colonel—they were transferred from time to time to command army regiments with the chance of returning later to the St. Petersburg district. The number of posts was huge, because every head of even a minor department had his official deputy, but the actual pay was, of necessity, very small, the salary of a Minister of State being only about £2,000 a year; he had also an official residence, which was kept up for him to an appreciable extent, but St. Petersburg was an exceedingly costly place. If one gave a nice but not extravagant dinner-party at one of the high-class restaurants, it might be reckoned to amount to about £4 per head, including tips—a large item in Russia. From time to time the Emperor would supplement the official salary of some important man by making him an allowance out of his own pocket.

The spring and early summer of 1893 passed quietly enough; in spite of rumour nothing alarming occurred or seemed likely to happen. Perhaps the most sensational story, current at the commencement of May, was that a partial Russian mobilisation had been ordered, to protect the suzerain rights of the Sultan in Bulgaria! This fairy-tale was declared to have elicited an ultimatum from the German Chargé d’Affairs, Count von Rex, to the effect that he would demand his passports at the first sign of Muscovite aggression.

It soon became apparent that the Russians were desirous of learning whether my personal correspondence contained anything of interest to them. A Queen’s Messenger arrived every fortnight with despatches, ladies’ hats, and other articles from London, and official correspondence was taken by him to England. Despatches,



however, were as a rule merely confirmatory of cablegrams, or were copies of documents transmitted to the Foreign Office from other parts of the world. But even a Foreign Office official could err at times, and, some little while previously, the de-code of a cablegram had been transmitted by post without having been paraphrased ! The subject-matter was of no real importance, but—especially as the document happened to be somewhat lengthy—it would give some clues to one of our cypher codes.

There were a number of different cyphers in use ; some would be employed but rarely, while, for general practice, perhaps two or three would be usual. A copy of every cypher cablegram, either to or from England, was sent by the telegraph office to the *Cabinet Noir*, where an expert staff was employed in attempts to learn the de-cyphers ; the same rule was in force with the international cable companies with relay stations in the empire, and, very occasionally, the authorities might have a stroke of luck through a careless consul leaving his cypher lying about his office. The expenditure of time and labour was scarcely worth the trouble, because cyphers were put out of date with sufficient frequency, and the task would have to be commenced all over again. My personal postal correspondence, both outgoing and incoming, began to be delayed a few weeks after my arrival, and, having been perused, was duly despatched, usually after twenty-four hours, but this surveillance did not last long.

Towards the end of May 1893, a little life came into the everlasting Central Asian problem. A Commission had been appointed to consider the question of the Kushk Canal ; our representative, Colonel Yate, arrived at the meeting-place, but heard no news about his Russian colleague ; he reported, however, that he had been received with great discourtesy by the Russian colonel commanding at Kara Tepé. Lord Rosebery, then Foreign Secretary, wished the matter to be discussed at St. Petersburg. Sir Robert Morier was still absent in the Crimea, and so Mr. (afterwards Sir Henry) Howard, the chargé d'affaires, was deputed to make a verbal announcement.

The acting Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Shishkin, said he would make enquiries, but would express no regret until Yate's allegation was proved, because he placed no confidence in the statements of British frontier officers in Asia ! Shishkin then went on to say that even Lord Dunmore, who had been invited by the Emperor personally to visit Central Asia, had intrigued there, a ridiculous idea.

The fact is that the Russians were very suspicious of British subjects travelling in those regions, and what made them more than usually alert was, probably, the fact that *The Times* of May 25th, 1893, had published a telegram from Simla to the effect that a British officer, believed to be Major Roche, who had accompanied Lord Dunmore, stated he had seen Russian lines laid out for sixteen hundred men, near the Pamirs, on the Murghab river. He added that, despite assurances to the contrary, the disputed territory would probably be occupied by the Emperor's troops during the summer of 1893.

This shows the very considerable amount of tension—or nerves—which existed on both sides, more so on ours because our information was not very accurate, and molehills were apt to be magnified into mountains at Simla. It would have been wiser for British travellers to have confined themselves to using their eyes, omitting indiscreet questions and statements.

The ambassador and his family returned from the Crimea, all much the better for their holiday, on May 30th, just after the Yate incident had been brought to the notice of the Russian Foreign Office. As the date of His Excellency's return was known it would have been better for the matter to have been held over for two or three days, especially as there was no hurry ; cablegrams did not necessarily mean anything urgent. In any case a subordinate member of the embassy could not have anything like the weight that Sir Robert had. While his firmness, where firmness was desirable, was well known, he objected to exaggerating comparative trifles if, *but only if*, this could be avoided, and he accordingly set out promptly to interview M. Shishkin.

On his return he came to the Chancery to dictate a telegram, but, before doing this, His Excellency described to us what had passed. The gist of it was that everything was smoothed over, but, he said—turning to Henry Howard, who had handled the former negotiations—"I had to tell Shishkin that you were a damned fool for having seen only one side of the question!" He proceeded to explain, very lucidly and pleasantly, his reasons for this criticism, which Howard appeared to accept.

I was a frequent guest at the embassy, and a day or two after his return to St. Petersburg we were sitting in his study after dinner with Lady Morier. The ambassador had received a long letter from Mr. Gladstone; they were old friends, but differed profoundly about Home Rule for Ireland. His Excellency, who had *The Times* on his lap, read out a few extracts, and then said to me:

"Of course you don't agree with that man who wants to cut down the tree of the Constitution."

I was standing just in front of the mantelpiece between Sir Robert and the fire-place and, knowing that he was not very well, thought it better to remain silent and not upset him; I hoped that he would pass on to some other subject. Somehow or another suspicion came into his mind that I might be an evil-doer, and he demanded sharply:

"Do you?"

"Well, sir," I replied, "I really do not see any other way out of it."

There was a moment's dead silence and, squinting at Lady Morier, I noticed that there was a twinkle in her eye which I could not diagnose. Gasping for breath the ambassador crumpled up *The Times* fiercely, flung it at my head, and roared:

"Damn it, sir, don't dare to mention the subject to me again! It makes me ill."

I fielded the newspaper, and explained that it was only his insistence which had caused me to speak. We conversed on other topics for a few moments, and then I withdrew, feeling that I had lost the friendship of a man for whom I had sentiments of the most sincere devotion.

The next morning, when I was in my room at the Chancery, a message came to say that His Excellency wished to see me. On my way upstairs the feeling came over me that it might, perhaps, be advisable for me to resign my post. I found him alone in his study, and he began at once :

“ I am so sorry I was so violent last night, and hope you will forgive me.”

“ Sir,” I answered, “ I regard your action in throwing *The Times* at me as one of the greatest compliments ever paid to me. When you pressed for my opinion I had to say what I thought.”

“ Well,” replied His Excellency, “ I was in pain yesterday, but now let us discuss the question from different viewpoints.”

His calmness during the ensuing conversation was remarkable ; not once did he show the slightest sign of impatience ; we talked the matter over on several future occasions and always in the same manner. He only wanted to get at the other person’s mind, and no trouble was too great for him to take.

It was a liberal education in itself to write down, at his dictation, a lengthy despatch occupying perhaps an hour or an hour and a half ; he never faltered for a word, his style was most attractive, and everything would be explained in the clearest possible manner. Each despatch was confined to one subject, and he always endeavoured, if not with invariable success, to get his subordinates to carry out this obviously desirable plan. One of his bones of contention with Colonel Gerard had been that the latter was apparently unable to adopt it.

As a young man, at the embassy in Vienna, Morier had made it his aim to learn as much as possible about the inhabitants of the country in which he found himself ; he by no means confined himself to associating chiefly with that somewhat wearisome body, the *corps diplomatique*, a hotbed of gossip, broadcasted often with ulterior designs. By travelling, and mixing with all conditions of people, he acquired a wonderful knowledge of various countries. This knowledge enabled him to forecast future events with remarkable accuracy, and the



Prince Consort said Morier was the only man who understood the German question.

Long before the days of the great continental armaments he became a convinced advocate of international free trade for two reasons: one was that this system would enable each country to produce the articles which were best suited to its genius, so that the whole world could live better and more economically; the other ground was that commercial rivalry, with protective tariffs, is quite likely to lead to war.

When I went to Russia in 1893, great armaments were already firmly established, small nations—with, however, several sensible exceptions, among them Scandinavia, Holland, and Belgium—aping their more powerful neighbours, and, as we now know, opening up fruitful fields for speculation save only in England and Germany; none of the other peoples in arms had much to show, in 1914, for the huge sums extracted from taxpayers for military use.

Russia had, each year, a great number of young men who attained the military age, but who, for financial reasons, could not be drafted into the army or navy; in fact, each continental Power was in this position except France, where young men studying for the priesthood were conscripted, and the bands of cavalry regiments were abolished, in order to be the better prepared for the future inevitable struggle of 1914. The Russians had adopted an ingenious system by which, on mobilisation, companies and battalions of reserve infantry were expanded perhaps sixteenfold or more into battalions, and regiments of four battalions each. The peace cadres were therefore very small, but the organisation was all worked out. These reserve units were bound to become of great importance in war, and Sir Robert was anxious to learn all about the system, which I had mentioned to him. To me the thing was as clear as daylight but, somehow, like a good many other teachers, there was just one point, an important one, which I could not succeed in explaining lucidly. Day after day we tackled the problem, and, at last, His Excellency said:

“ You must think me a damned fool for not grasping the subject ! ”

The obvious and true answer was that my elucidation was at fault. A chance remark of mine, however, suddenly cleared the atmosphere altogether, and Morier had been determined not to quit the field until he was master of the situation.

We were talking one day about diplomacy, and no man could have had a clearer knowledge of its limitations than my chief. It was, of course, well known that the diplomacy inspired from Vienna was really of a low type : Vienna was never happy unless it was intriguing for its own advantage or promoting discord between other Powers. Morier, alluding to these facts, told me that, in spite of all the ceaseless efforts of the Austrian Government, “ I have never known any country so badly served by its representatives abroad.” They were always over-reaching themselves, and were, on the whole, stupid, if cunning.

Nobody could be more diplomatic than Sir Robert if occasion required this, but he was known to be honest, whereas some of his colleagues were quite the reverse, and their interests suffered accordingly. He told me that, some time after the Penj-deh trouble and negotiations of 1885, when the situation had become so serious that Mr. Gladstone asked Parliament for a vote of eleven millions, assurances were given by the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs that no more expeditions into doubtful or admittedly foreign regions would be despatched. These pledges had the sanction of the Emperor, Alexander III, a thoroughly honest and peaceful man. One day, however, it came to the ears of the ambassador that a new expedition in Central Asia—to Chamiab, I think—was being prepared, not on a large scale but, nevertheless, in violation of the agreement.

The matter had, of course, been reported to London. The Russian Foreign Office had denied absolutely the truth of the report, but Morier was aware that the military authorities were apt, at times, to take their own measures without consulting the Foreign Minister, who by no means always approved of these acts. Various plausible explanations could be given after an event, and the fact remained

that, in Central Asia, Russia was impregnable. Morier received instructions from London to be very cautious ; the British Government was strongly averse to being drawn into a situation of which the outcome could not be foreseen.

Being at the end of a telegraph wire all that the ambassador had to do was to arrange matters somehow without committing the Cabinet to anything drastic. He knew, however, that the English public was, at the time, hostile to and apprehensive of Russia. Its own chosen leader, Gladstone, had nearly declared war not long before, and Morier resolved to act for himself ; he wanted to put a stop to these annoying expeditions, of which the results could not be foretold. Convinced that Russia would do anything in reason to avoid hostilities with us, Morier, disregarding his instructions, took it upon himself to tell Giers, the Foreign Minister, that, if the enterprise, of which he had assured knowledge, was carried out, "I will demand my passports," and, as public opinion in England was excited about Russia, war would almost certainly have resulted.

The result of this drastic ultimatum was immediate, and matters were arranged amicably. The Russian Foreign Office, whether it had been kept in the dark or not, was certain that Morier would carry out his threat failing compliance with his terms, and our relations took a very decided turn for the better. Sir Robert, in narrating the circumstances to me—I have quoted his words—said :

"Of course I did not report the method which I adopted to clear the air ; if I had done so I would have been kicked out."

The facts were, nevertheless, bound to leak out in view of the close relationship between the respective Courts. Morier's action had been so strikingly successful that official notice of it, based on unofficial information, could not well be taken, but he fell into disfavour at the British Court, although he had shown the difference between a great man and one who is only near-great.

In September 1893, shortly after his death, Sir Eric Barrington, who had been principal Private Secretary to Lord Salisbury at the Foreign Office, told me that Sir

Robert had been on really intimate terms with our Royal Family until he gave effect to his own views in defiance of his instructions. Talking to his successor, Sir Frank Lascelles, on September 1st, 1894, I mentioned that Morier had not reported his action, but Sir Frank replied : " No, he didn't, but it was, I believe, known, and led to the Queen's remark to me that her ambassador at St. Petersburg was carrying out a policy, and a successful one, of his own." His Excellency then related the details about this.

He was sitting next a member of the Royal Family at dinner, and Morier's name was mentioned, whereupon the personage remarked : " Sir Robert hates the Battenbergs." Later on two telegrams were brought in and shown to Sir Frank : one was from Lord Salisbury to the Queen, while the other was Her Majesty's reply. They referred to Morier's action at St. Petersburg, which had been disapproved. Lascelles, knowing there must have been some special reason for showing them to him, learned them by heart. When the Queen spoke to him afterwards, she enquired whether he had seen the messages, and went on to say :

" Now there is *my* ambassador, Sir Robert Morier, who *presumes* to carry out a policy of his own, *and* the extraordinary thing is that he carries it out successfully ! "

This happened when Lascelles was appointed Minister to Bucharest in 1887, and went to Osborne to kiss hands, whereas Morier, who was in England on leave, had not been invited, which was quite contrary to the usual custom.

About six weeks before this conversation with Sir Frank, I had seen Lady Morier in England, and she told me that the Germans always hated her husband, because he was too honest, too able, and too strong for them. They used to intrigue against him ever since Lord Derby's time, but that statesman disconcerted them by refusing to pay any attention whatever to anonymous charges. Sir Robert was not anti-German, but he detested the unscrupulous methods of the Iron Chancellor, Bismarck, who prevented Morier's appointment as ambassador to Berlin. He did not, however, like some people, allow personal matters to influence him in official affairs, and he was of the



Chancellor's opinion that the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871 laid the foundation of future disasters.

The "hidden hand" had a great deal of influence at one time with the British Court. Bismarck made it felt when Sir Robert was at St. Petersburg: His Excellency received a letter from the Foreign Office to say that the Germans objected to his presence in Russia, and that he must therefore be prepared to relinquish his post in the course of the next few months. Circumstances, however, changed in the meantime, and no transfer was made; before Lord Dufferin relinquished the Viceroyalty of India, in 1888, he asked for an ambassadorial post, and was appointed to Rome, which prevented Morier from being sent there. Later on—in 1892, after Count Caprivi had succeeded Bismarck—His Excellency wanted Rome for reasons of health, as Lord Dufferin was transferred to Paris, but the Germans were actually sufficiently influential in England to prevent this, as Sir Philip Currie wrote to him.

This was not the last occasion on which the German Government, that is to say, the German Emperor, William II, after the fall of Bismarck, brought pressure to bear on the policy of this country, but the other instances do not belong to this volume. It is probable that the chief reasons for this impudent interference in Morier's case was the fear lest that great man should detach Italy from the Triple Alliance, a step which might well have led to the defection of its third member, Austria. But the Germans killed him, for he died in harness a few months afterwards.

Although ancient history, these facts are important to-day, because what has happened before may happen again: men of infinitely smaller mental calibre than the late Lord Salisbury and Mr. Gladstone may allow themselves, when at the helm of State, to be cajoled or threatened into pursuing a line of foreign or domestic policy disastrous for this great Empire.

Owing to the kindness of His Excellency and his family I had the privilege of being introduced to several members of St. Petersburg society whom I might not otherwise have met, as they did not, as a rule, care particularly for

foreigners as such, and military attachés especially were regarded with great suspicion. Every society has its failings as well as its virtues, due largely to its traditions : in Russia the aristocracy and the landed gentry generally had been pleasant enough to their dependents, when they happened to meet them, for the Russian nature is essentially kind. Some landowners, however, possessors of gigantic estates, never visited them at all, while others only did so on rare occasions, but most proprietors spent a portion of each year in their country houses.

But these were not what we would term good landlords in the sense of interesting themselves in the welfare of their tenants ; owing to their upbringing, their chief aim was revenue, to be spent in any of the European capitals, or other fashionable resorts. The inevitable result was that in March 1917 the landowners had no friends among the people ; not a voice was raised on their behalf, and the ruin was complete.

The immense kindness and hospitality which I received in Russia are far too vividly impressed on my memory for me ever to forget them, and it is an enduring source of the greatest regret that circumstances have prevented me being able, in some measure, to requite this unstinted friendliness. Often I arrived at some country house, perhaps a hundred miles from the nearest railway station, at any hour of the night, and found all kinds of luxuries awaiting me. Yet I had never seen my hosts, who had merely been warned by a relative or friend of my approaching visit. Nor were the peasantry less generous according to their scanty means.

Hospitality was at its zenith in Russia. Prince Serge Belosselsky-Belozersky was married to a beautiful and charming American lady, Miss Whittier, and they invited me to stay at their delightful house in the environs of St. Petersburg. His father was one of the great magnates, whose wife was the sister of the celebrated Skobelev. Instead of a visit lasting two or three days, I was an inmate of their home for a year or so, and during that time everything in both establishments was as much at my disposal as if it had belonged to me ! Prince Victor

Kochubey, another magnate, did not profess to like England or the English, but I could have stayed with him and his very attractive wife for an indefinite period. Prince Vladimir Orlov, and his first wife—now, unfortunately, dead—were similarly generous, so were Count and Countess Shouvalov, and many others. The scale on which things were done was truly magnificent.

In time therefore one got to know the psychology of all classes by mixing with every grade, and forecasts regarding the future could then be made. Years afterwards the Emperor Nicholas was discussing with me what would happen in the event of a Revolution, and we both came independently to the same conclusion, namely, chaos. Details about this will be given later.

These digressions have somewhat anticipated the future ; the kindness of the Moriers in helping me in St. Petersburg circles led me into them. The ambassador asked me once if I objected to a little criticism ; as he was not given to enquiring what he might be permitted to say, I felt flattered, and reassured His Excellency.

We had recently been discussing some subject or another, and, after he had read my despatch on it, he said : “ You speak better than you write.” It was very kind of him to take so much trouble to try and teach me, and I knew my writing must indeed be poor, seeing that I had taken days to explain a simple little point relating to reserve troops.

Our relations were always of the happiest nature, and he was greatly pleased to hear that, for my part, whatever friction might arise between England and Russia from time to time, my belief was we could more than hold our own if it should eventually come to a clash of arms, which each side hoped to avoid. It appeared that this had been his view ; his sound commonsense and vision had enabled him instinctively to diagnose the situation absolutely correctly.

He and I were in a minority at this time—June 1893. Not only was Simla in its usual state of tension, but anxiety had taken root in some quarters in London. It has seemed to me, for many years past, that the personal

factor has weighed with some of our staff to our own detriment. To take a fairly recent instance : before the war in South Africa some of our most influential military authorities, among them the late Sir James Grierson, were pro-German, and would, indeed, have liked to copy Berlin slavishly. Then there arose ill-feeling due to various causes, and the hitherto supposedly perfect German machine was derided as lath and plaster, whereas the French, considered previously as of no great account, were super-excellent. Now the Germans did not allow sentiment to interfere with their plans—until troops were detached from the Western Front in 1914 in order to thrust back the Russian invasion of East Prussia, and this was only done because the German Emperor ordered it.

We were apt either to underrate or to overrate our potential enemy, in this case Russia, where fear predominated with some of us. The consequence was that, in 1893, the War Office in London despatched officers to investigate matters in various parts of that country, before obtaining the approval of the ambassador. To make matters worse these officers gave instructions to consuls and, of course, it was not long before their proceedings came to the ears of His Excellency, who objected, very naturally, to this sort of thing, which was sure to cause friction without doing any good to ourselves. Sir Robert told me one day that he had “ a vulturesque crow to pick ” with General Chapman, the Chief of the Intelligence Division. His Excellency then went on to say that he much disliked criticising one officer to another, especially as I had been one of the general’s subordinates, and had always been treated with the greatest kindness and consideration by him. “ But I can’t help it,” said Morier, and I am bound to admit that he didn’t, as his eloquent flow of language proved.

Relations between France and Russia were, meanwhile, becoming closer, and a French military Mission arrived at St. Petersburg in June 1893. Its purpose was to see troops in various parts of Russia, and the well-known French cavalry officer, General Bonie, formed a high opinion of the cavalry, and of the Cossacks in particular,



so Moulin, the French Military Attaché, told me. This surprised me.

Shortly after the return of the Court from the Crimea I was summoned, in June 1893, to Gatchina, near St. Petersburg, in order to be received in private audience by the Emperor, Alexander III, and his Consort. On arrival at my station of destination I was met by a gorgeously equipped Court carriage, and driven to the Palace, an unpretentious wooden structure, not very modern in arrangement. I was then conducted to a suite of apartments, and it seemed as if I was expected to make a lengthy stay, for there was a large bedroom, a sitting-room, and the usual appurtenances.

Presently, it being about twelve o'clock, a great feast was spread before me, while the wines—all uncorked—included champagne, Burgundy, and red and white Bordeaux, besides a considerable variety of priceless cognac and other liqueurs. In fact the supply of food would have sufficed for a dozen persons, while the vinous refreshments would have satisfied fifty. I refrained from enquiring about the ultimate destination of the contents of the numerous bottles.

I was received first by the Empress in her sitting-room, and, looking out of the window on to the garden, could not help noticing the sentry amid the lilac trees. As always Her Majesty was charming, and, as soon as the interview was over, I was conducted to the Emperor's study. Of splendid physique and very simple and natural manner, he looked, as he was, the fit ruler of a growing, mighty country. It was he who made the Russian Court Russian, in no way relishing the former veneer of French customs. Ambassadors and Ministers, on arrival, were of course also received privately, while other diplomatists went to a general reception.

A military attaché at the two great military Courts of Berlin and St. Petersburg—if a native of certain countries—might have frequent opportunities of personal contact with the Sovereigns and their chief officials. This fact, aided by travel among all other sections of the population, gave him unrivalled chances of studying their mentality,

as well as of grasping their weak and their strong points. If one wishes really to know a people one should travel third class, visit the villages, and learn how the inhabitants live, in addition to having reserved accommodation in trains, and other luxuries from time to time.

Morier's "vulturesque crow" was, meanwhile, disposed of; ample apologies for interfering with his consuls and promises of future good behaviour were accepted, but His Excellency "swore" that things should not be done without his approval. Placing ourselves in Russian shoes we were likely to be regarded with suspicion, for it was not long since Sir Charles MacGregor, when Quarter-master-General in India, had compiled, with extraneous aid, *The Defence of India*.

His career had been passed in that country, and he naturally wanted to be prepared. Some of the work was sound enough, but its most important part was written by a junior officer of imagination, Captain (afterwards Sir James) Grierson, a staff officer of the editor. He summarised everything by declaring his conviction that India would never be safe until Russia should be driven west of the Caspian! An army from India attempting such a stupendous feat could not have counted even on the benevolent neutrality of the natives in Russian Central Asia; there was much in Russian administration which a native preferred to the more rigid rule in India, especially as regards the system of taxation.

MacGregor's book was confidential, but the story goes that one of our great explorers, Sir Francis Younghusband, on meeting the renowned Grombchevsky in the Pamir region, found him studying the volume in question! At any rate it was certain that it had fallen into Russian hands—Grombchevsky afterwards showed me his copy. The Muscovites naturally believed it to represent the London view, but the English Government repudiated the work wholeheartedly; this, however, only broadened their grin. Morier expressed his opinion about the compilation to me in the flowery language usual when he was irritated, but neither of us knew who was the author of the "bag and baggage" policy until after my appointment

to St. Petersburg, when Grierson wrote to His Excellency to express his great regret for having advocated such a view, adding that he was fully cognisant of his error. This was satisfactory as far as it went, but some time elapsed before he discarded the idea that, if we would not, or could not—as he had originally proposed—attack Russia, she would certainly fall on some Power, on us probably, as soon as the new rifle had been issued to the Army.

A somewhat barbaric buffer State, like Afghanistan, between two mighty and developing Powers, was bound not only to cause friction at times, but to evolve two sharply contending schools of thought: one of them being for the partition and annexation of the buffer, while the other believed that, once our frontier in Asia should be conterminous with Russia, war would be certain. As there did not appear to be any good grounds for the conviction that a conterminous frontier in Asia was more likely to lead to a clash of arms than a similar dividing line in Europe, a common boundary in that continent attracted me more than the other plan. A very distinguished Russian, M. Yermoloff, was of a different opinion altogether, and, like doctors, we agreed to differ. He was a man of wide experience, and when I made his acquaintance in 1893 was in the Ministry of Ways and Communications.

At the beginning of July 1893, the Government of India was relieved to learn that there was a satisfactory explanation of the report of lines having been laid out for sixteen hundred Russian troops in the Trans-Alai region, on the Murghab river; about eight hundred men had been stationed there, and, as they were to be relieved by an equal number, a camping ground had been marked out for sixteen hundred troops to accommodate both bodies for a short time.

One of Morier's many striking traits was that, when a man did good work for him, he never failed to praise him by name. For example, he would write in a despatch that "thanks to the unusual ability and zeal of—say—Mr. Eliot, I am in a position to inform your Lordship, etc." The late Sir Frank Lascelles was similarly generous, while, on the other hand, some preferred to take all the

credit, laying the blame on a subordinate if anything miscarried when the chief was really in fault.

I have referred to or quoted the late Sir Robert Morier to a considerable extent, because he was the greatest man in or out of the army under whom I ever had the honour of serving. In saying this there is no intention of attempting to belittle the many admirable qualities of others, but my opinion was and—after more than thirty years—still is, that he was the most outstanding figure of all. The post at St. Petersburg was an extraordinarily difficult one, and it was because Sir Robert and his family made there for themselves such a remarkable position that even the great Iron Chancellor—a man not subject to nerves—feared them. An ambassadress may or may not be an influential personage: Lady Morier undoubtedly was very much so. Some other ladies in her position, while very desirous of attaining her standard, failed for one reason or another. All that need be stated here is that, in Lady Morier, His Excellency had a truly efficient helpmeet; a most kind-hearted lady, she was also a *grande dame*. Miss Morier (now Lady Wester-Wemyss) was also *très bien vue* in society; a lady of strong character, she has a heart of gold.

The visit to the Crimea had been beneficial to Sir Robert, but another change of air became imperative. Accompanied by his family, he left St. Petersburg for Switzerland on July 4th, 1893, on leave of absence, but alas! he never returned, and the announcement of his death at Montreux came as a sad shock to his devoted admirers. The best evidence of his extraordinary success in Russia is, perhaps, afforded by the fact that Lord Rosebery waited for many months before making a new selection, because, as he wrote to Lady Morier, her husband had left a gap almost impossible to fill. Had His Excellency been ambassador to Russia during the Great War, the Revolution might never have occurred in the middle of it. I never met his like.



## CHAPTER V

THE political and military situations were quiet enough after Sir Robert Morier's departure, and I decided to spend the remainder of the summer of 1893 close to the large training camp of the Imperial Guard at Krasnoe Selo, a few miles from the capital.

Various matters came up, of course, from time to time for discussion between the British and the Russian Governments ; they related chiefly to Asiatic affairs, the Chinese being occasionally a complicating factor. They claimed portions of the Pamir region, but were informed that Russia refused to negotiate unless all Celestial troops should be withdrawn from disputed territory. There was nothing serious in this ; diplomacy had to do something in order to keep its hand in.

While the Russian Army grew gradually in size the Navy was not neglected, for the Mediterranean squadron, consisting of five ships, was formed in the same year, 1893. It had a long way to go from the Baltic in order to reach its objective, as warships were forbidden by treaty to emerge from the Black Sea.

The French Military Attaché at that time, and for long afterwards, was Commandant—or Major—Moulin. We became very friendly, although, as he told me, our shameless occupation of Egypt, despite our promises to evacuate, must continue to embitter official relations between his country and mine. As regards this and other matters we laboured under the disadvantage that not only was the British Press believed to be under secret Government control, but that one or more journals were directly and regularly inspired. Nothing, it seemed, could disabuse Russian officials of this fallacy, no doubt because all published matter was rigidly controlled by the St. Petersburg authorities. On one occasion an article in the London

*Standard* had been quoted by the Russian Foreign Office as proof positive that the paper was the mouthpiece of the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury. So far from this being the case, it may be mentioned that, at a garden-party at Hatfield, which took place just at the time when the offending article was published, the editor of the *Standard* was the only one of the London editors who did not receive an invitation.

On August 1st, 1893, a tariff war commenced between Germany and Russia, and trade between them was at a standstill. As time passed, however, the two Governments concerned saw that it would be to their respective interests to come to an amicable agreement, and so it happened. Germany was ready enough for war, but she did not want it, while Russia was unprepared, and her communications with the German frontier were by no means good. There was no macadamised road in the empire, except one in the Caucasus.

In addition to the accredited military attachés a Japanese colonel attended the manœuvres in August 1893. This was prior to the war between China and Japan, and there was a good deal of speculation among the Russians as to the reason for his visit, seeing that the land of the Rising Sun was already represented by a military agent.

The visitor apparently knew no language but his own, but it did not follow that the Russian tongue was strange to him. A Japanese officer, attached to the embassy at Berlin, had ridden through Russia and Siberia on his way home in the early nineties. He had disclaimed all acquaintance with the Russian language, but was very proficient in it. Soon afterwards he was known to all the world as the celebrated Fukushima. His compatriot at the Russian manœuvres certainly followed the operations carefully; so much so that Moulin, my French colleague, said to me: "*Tiens, il n'a pas l'air d'un colonel de carton*" (He seems to be something more than a pasteboard colonel). The fact is, that neither Moulin nor I—to say nothing of others—knew anything then about either the Chinese or the Japanese. Later on, indeed, when they were at war, Moulin was confident that the Celestials would emerge as

victors. "*Ils ouvriront simplement leurs parapluies et remporteront la victoire*" (They will merely open their umbrellas and walk off with victory).

Meanwhile, a curious thing happened. Sir Robert Morier and his family, not being in Russia when he died, arrangements had to be made for the sale of their furniture, and for the despatch to England, where Lady Morier was, of his papers and other things, which she desired to keep. Morier had been a prolific writer, and had preserved the voluminous correspondence connected with his career. These papers filled twelve large boxes. It was customary for the Foreign Office to print despatches of interest, and to circulate them, when desirable, to Cabinet Ministers and to our other foreign missions. Morier had therefore replaced some of his own original drafts by printed copies.

It was, of course, the universal custom for men in great positions to retain their papers, and the mere fact that they kept printed copies instead of drafts in no way invalidated their rights. Veracious history would, otherwise, be impossible.

The late Sir Henry Howard was the chargé d'affaires, and Miss Morier came to St. Petersburg in order to arrange about the furniture, and the despatch of the boxes. Most people would have handed them over to Lady Morier's representative, and nothing more would have been heard of the matter. Mr. Howard, however, thought differently. Aware of the existence of the Foreign Office prints he referred the question to London, whence came the reply, to the general astonishment, that the boxes, together with their contents, must be sent thither for custody. It was said that an ambassador had no rights concerning papers which he had penned or received in his official capacity.

Howard therefore declined to hand them over, and they were despatched to England at the public expense in charge of a Queen's Messenger. Lady Morier, whose father, General Peel, had been Secretary of State for War, was not one to sit down quietly and accept the situation without making very strenuous efforts to recover the papers. The Foreign Office remained adamant until, as time went

on, it offered a compromise, namely, that the papers should be returned to the rightful owner, on condition that she signed an undertaking to publish nothing without official sanction.

Lady Morier told me this when I was visiting her in England in 1894, and we discussed various schemes for extracting the precious documents from the official claws. One after another, however, they were put aside on account of some flaw or another. It occurred to me that her cousin, Mr. Speaker Peel, could use his great influence to induce the authorities to see reason, but this plan did not appeal to her.

"You see, he is also an official, and, in my experience, all officials are alike and hold together."

Relying solely on her own stout heart and skill, she at last obtained delivery of the twelve boxes after a long struggle. Sir Edward Grey, then Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had been the principal defending force on behalf of the Foreign Secretary, and very ably did he present his side of the case; nevertheless, the Foreign Office "had to capitulate on every point."

As a matter of fact, Lady Morier had no intention of publishing anything which might have embarrassed the British Government of the day, unless the Germans should attack and vilify her late husband, in which case she would hold herself free to act as seemed best to her; the papers were also indispensable for the time when the life of Sir Robert came to be written.

Ever since Lady Morier's victory over the Foreign Office every despatch printed by that Department has the following heading: "This document is the property of His Britannic Majesty's Government." Obviously the catch—as the Americans say—was that the Foreign Office wanted the two damning letters which proved the power of Germany to influence England's management of her own affairs. The power, if not the desire, vanished in King Edward's reign, and more than one case in point could be cited.

In October 1893, the political horizon seemed clear, so I decided on a tour in Transcaucasia, where there was a



large number of troops, to say nothing of our own vast oil interests. Just before I started Grierson wrote from the War Office about the anxiety of the Foreign Office concerning Russia's alleged preparations for "a dash on Constantinople." In the Great War our views about that capital and its environs changed completely, but in 1893 this kind of scare was a hardy annual; sometimes, indeed, it would rear its head more often than once in a twelve-month, and it may as well be stated now that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at Vienna was the chief instigator of these alarms, which were circulated in quite a cunning manner. The relations between London and Vienna were always very good, and the Dual Monarchy took advantage of this fact to further its own political interests. If it could succeed in straining or embittering the relations between England and Russia, so much the better, because this would make Europe a safer place for Austria-Hungary. Always beaten in the field, that empire was steadfastly looking forward to war.

The fact is that our diplomacy laboured under a great disadvantage: it was not that all its members were dull of vision; Sir Charles Eliot—afterwards ambassador at Tokio—has quite extraordinary ability: Sir George Grahame, now ambassador at Brussels, is unexcelled. The competition for entry into the diplomatic service is far more severe than in anything else; there may be a score of candidates—all extremely highly qualified—for, perhaps, one or two vacancies.

The root difficulty for British diplomatists was that they were brought up with high traditions. In the course of negotiations they would not, of course, lay all their cards on the table if it were wiser not to do so, but when they gave their word, officially or unofficially, it could usually be relied upon absolutely. This was not the case where foreign diplomatists were concerned: in all ordinary matters of daily life they might well be above reproach, but once it came to business, scruples vanished. A British ambassador might tell a foreign one, an old friend, something under the plea of profound secrecy, if it did not affect his colleague's country. But if the foreigner

had not already a foot in the hostile camp, he would find some means of putting it there, in order to make trouble for us. Of course, it may be urged that the British ambassador in question should not have been indiscreet, but then, the temperaments of ambassadors vary as in ordinary mortals.

Our system of acquiring information differed also diametrically from that of other countries, which had a vast network of secret service organisations. They were none of them of real value in the long run, but in peace time they afforded opportunities for diplomatic intriguing, which caused trouble at times. Our diplomatists had to rely chiefly on their own judgment and on what they heard from colleagues. As far as my experience of eight years' service under the Foreign Office goes, it was wisest to pay no attention to statements and gossip gleaned in this manner, and altogether diplomatic society struck me as being rather dull. Looked upon, as it was, with suspicion at St. Petersburg and Berlin, its members were perforce obliged to depend largely upon each other for social intercourse ; of course, there were many official entertainments, and many exceptions, but, on the whole, diplomatists formed a body apart. Nor did the Foreign Office, it must be confessed, encourage zeal, and several years of copying despatches without having original work to perform is apt, in time, to dull the wits. This explains why men have occasionally risen to be ambassadors who have shown, too late, that they were entirely unfitted for their exalted posts.

It must, however, be acknowledged that British diplomatists were faced with great, sometimes insuperable, difficulties, owing to the very fact that they were—on the whole—honest ; the foreigner could not understand it. In Russia especially they were bound to be enormously embarrassed. It was also almost impossible for the Russians, who had read *The Defence of India*, to have faith in us. On page 241 of that work the following passage occurred :

“ I solemnly assert my belief that there can never be a real settlement of the Russo-Indian question till Russia is driven out of the Caucasus and Turkestan.”

My journey to Transcaucasia was not delayed by the news of the Constantinople scare, as there was obviously nothing in it. That Russia had set her heart on ultimately acquiring that capital and the Straits was no secret : Russians often talked to me about it, but they all knew that the time was not yet ripe for the attempt. Military attachés had decidedly favourable opportunities for acquiring knowledge, and learning what was and what was not feasible. They could travel all over a country, and mix with every class of its inhabitants, from the palace to the hovel, if they knew the language and understood foreigners.

Captain (now Admiral Sir George) Egerton had been appointed naval attaché to various European Powers in 1893, the Admiralty not then considering there was enough work for more than one or two officers in that capacity. He wished to visit the Black Sea fleet and dockyard at Sevastopol, so we decided to meet there ; an unfortunate *contretemps* occurred, as Mrs. Egerton and I found afterwards, when we were going in different directions, that each of us had the other's luggage !

The lack of metalled roads in Russia increased enormously the difficulties of any kind of transport. When the snow melts in springtime, the streets—if they may be so termed—are positively dangerous, and fatal accidents are not uncommon, because, in some places, the traffic makes holes several feet in depth. These pits are full to the brim of liquid mud, and there is nothing to show that there is any more risk than there is on the other portions of the road, which is, perhaps, only a foot or two deep in mud. Once a cart or a human being on foot stumbles into one of these places he is fortunate if he manages to escape alive, and it is remarkable how quickly certain portions become dangerous. The Russians, however, being accustomed to these pitfalls, and being also fatalistic, merely hope for the best while being prepared for the worst.

It was certain that Russia, if she was contemplating hostilities against Turkey in the not distant future, would be making some military preparations in Transcaucasia,

which it would be impossible to conceal. Nothing of the sort was going on there ; indeed, everything pointed the other way, namely, to a strengthening of the forces in European Russia by the withdrawal of troops from the Caucasus. General Sheremetiev was the Governor-General of the region at the time of my visit to Tiflis ; he was a member of one of the great Russian houses, and was kind-ness itself to me, although we had not met previously.

As an instance of how slowly things moved in Russia, her military authorities had begun, in 1889, to improve the road communications on the Black Sea front of Transcaucasia. In October 1893, I went to inspect a short stretch, about eighteen miles long, which was to be constructed between Batum and a little place called Kobaleti. The intention was to provide a sheltered route, covered by the hills from our guns firing from the Black Sea, as the railway, running along the coast, could easily have been shelled. The work was being carried out partly by contractors and partly by troops ; certainly it was a hilly road, but not a very difficult one to construct. At the time of my visit the different sections had not been joined together, no bridges had been built, nor was any portion metalled although excellent material for this purpose was close at hand.

The first thing that strikes a traveller to Transcaucasia is the smell and taste of oil which pervades all things, food, wine, and everything else. There was a pipe line from Baku, the great oil centre on the Caspian, to the Black Sea. Port Said in the old days was a nest of villainy of every kind, but at Baku, in 1893, I was assured that a perfectly reliable assassin—or any reasonable number—could be hired for the equivalent of about four shillings in our money.

When I visited Sevastopol with Captain Egerton it was both instructive and amusing to see a battleship and the dockyard in his company. He had arranged to inspect, among other things, the torpedo depôt. The Russians thought, no doubt, that he could not learn much about their torpedo equipment by merely looking at the outside. They were quite wrong : Egerton had been a great expert



in the *Vernon*, the school ship, and could tell what the inside of a torpedo was like, just by glancing at it, in the same way that a stockman knows all about a steer simply from its exterior. The Russians were quite surprised when he gave them information about their own models, and were impressed accordingly.

Count Moussin-Pushkin, the Commander-in-Chief of the Odessa military district, left me free to inspect anything I wanted to see: his district would have been the first one to supply troops for any military operations against Turkey, and I was aware that some of the forces in his command were maintained always on an establishment higher even than that laid down for Poland.

The idea was, of course, to be ready for immediate action, and the Commander-in-Chief made no secret of the fact that the Bosphorus and Constantinople were the goals. Stores, equipment, and everything else were ready for such an expedition with one important exception: it was said quite openly that the Black Sea must become a Russian lake, but the navy was quite inefficient. In fact, Russia was not then in a position to be aggressive, supposing that her Sovereign wished to start a conflagration.

This information—so satisfactory from our point of view—must have been known to other Powers besides England, but it did not prevent the propagation of scares. It was positively affirmed in various quarters, Russian and other, towards the end of 1893, that a concentration of troops was taking place in Bessarabia, in the Odessa command. There might have been cause for anxiety if such had been the case, because the barrack accommodation there was so scanty that fresh troops would only have been despatched thither with a view to early action. There had been recently thirty-eight minor changes of garrison in European Russia and the Caucasus; they had been carried out chiefly for administrative purposes, and not a single one had taken place in Bessarabia!

On this occasion, however, the disease had spread. John Bright, whose fame entitled him to exaggerate sometimes, said once that he had never known the Stock

Exchange to be right in its reading of the near political future. At the end of 1893 I heard from London that "the City people here are full of apprehension of a war in 1894, and some of them are insuring against war risks in that year." The growing intimacy between France and Russia had caused some apprehension.

The source of these fears was the alarming gossip from the latter country; this chatter was certain to run wild in a land which had no free Press, and foreigners were apt to be influenced by it. The same thing has happened in the case of the Soviet Government. Letters have reached me, however, from Russia, and from Russians who had obtained permission to leave the country for a time, which show that matters have improved generally to a very considerable extent in their unhappy land with the lapse of time. It is not suggested that matters are anything like what they ought to be, but there has been substantial improvement.

Several of my correspondents, holding monarchical principles, have been working under the Soviet rule. Count Benckendorff, the son of that charming gentleman, the late Russian Ambassador in London, has been serving it. He was, I heard, given leave of absence in order to visit his family in England, and spoke of the progress that was being made. Yet he was not specially favoured, for he owns a mansion of large dimensions, and was permitted to occupy only two rooms in it. The fact is, in my opinion, that our attempts to upset the Soviet régime succeeded only in strengthening it.

By the end of 1893 no successor to Sir Robert Morier had been announced, but I lost a good friend in the Foreign Office by the appointment of Sir Philip Currie, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, to Constantinople; he had always been very appreciative of my efforts, such as they were, in Russia. Another good friend, Sir Thomas (afterwards Lord) Sanderson, succeeded him; he was a prodigious worker with a wonderful memory, and how he managed to write a number of letters to me—a minor subordinate—in addition to being the head of a Department, dealing daily with problems all over the

world, was a mystery to me. I owe him many acts of the greatest kindness.

In spite of the anxiety prevalent in London business circles the year closed quietly, and, interesting as it had been to me, the future was to surpass it greatly in this respect.

## CHAPTER VI

THE New Year dawned quietly. The Italian Government, however, was somewhat disturbed about Russian aims in Abyssinia, and there had been rumours of the despatch of a Muscovite military Mission to the Emperor Menelek in order to reorganise his army. The Italian Ambassador, Baron Marochetti, asked me, in January, about these reports; I told him my belief that Russia would not endeavour to do more than carry on isolated intrigues in that country, under the cloak of the connection between the Orthodox and Ethiopian Churches. The former had immense political influence, and a remarkable instance of this will be given later. A couple of years were to elapse before Menelek succeeded in freeing himself of Italian tutelage.

Adverting to lighter topics, there was a State Ball at the Winter Palace in February 1894, attended by between two to three thousand people. Two features were peculiar to entertainments of this description—whether official or private—in the Russian capital, showing what Society there meant by hospitality. There was no overcrowding, and all the guests sat down to supper simultaneously. This was very pleasantly surprising to a newly arrived Englishman, accustomed to quite a different system, and the host—whether Emperor or another—invariably made a tour of the supper rooms before taking his own place, in order to assure himself that there was a seat for everybody.

At this particular ball a rumour spread like wildfire to the effect that Queen Victoria was dead. At the embassy we had not even heard that Her Majesty was ill, but my denials of the report were accepted in a few instances only. Gossip was bound to run its course, and it was discovered eventually that the author of the tidings was one of the



cooks, whose source of information was not disclosed. Possibly he added spice to the story.

My disclaimers had two results: an acquaintance of mine, a Georgian princess by birth, married to an aged Russian nobleman, a dull dog, was always on the look-out for news, true or false. She was very indignant when I ridiculed the story of the Queen's death, and turned furiously on me, declaring that, of course, nobody would believe a word of mine, as I was nothing better than a "horrid spy." It may be remarked parenthetically that some foreigners frequently accuse the British of mean actions: presumably they judge others by themselves.

About three weeks afterwards we met at a party at the Austrian Embassy; she came up to me, vowing that I had "cut" her several times because she had "dared" to speak about my Queen. Probably I had, as my thoughts are given to wool-gathering, and I have often done the same thing to my wife. While explaining the reason for my bad manners, I added that, presumably, she was cross with me because her Secret Service Department had shown itself so inefficient regarding foreign news.

It must be admitted, however, that both her husband, Apollo—a somewhat unfortunate name—and his wife were indeed loyal subjects. When the sad death of the Emperor, Alexander III, occurred towards the end of 1894, everybody went of course into the deepest mourning, but this couple did something more impressive. Carriages in St. Petersburg were very old-fashioned in those days, and Apollo's bride used to go about in a funny little one-horse brougham. This was swathed, even down to the shafts, in the most doleful crape procurable, a remarkable sight.

The other incident at that same State Ball really did astonish me. A very charming young lady, who was a member of the princely family of the Ourusovs, had likewise enquired as to the truth of the rumour, and quite accepted my view concerning it. She went on, however, to say that it was very sad that the Queen drank so much.

Most people were aware that Her Majesty's complexion was bright, but Princess Ourusov's remark was so extra-

ordinary that, while I was protesting vigorously, I was wondering how on earth such a cruel slander could have reached the ears of any educated person, much less those of a highly bred, highly cultured, and clever girl. Anybody interested in the Queen's régime could have discovered that no one was more abstemious. My denial did not, this time, carry conviction: the girl turned to her aunt, Princess Gagarine, who was standing near-by in conversation with a friend, and enquired, speaking in English:

"Aunt, is it true that Queen Victoria goes to bed *teepsee* every night?"

The elder lady, who understood but did not care to speak English, replied:

"*Mais, ma chère, toute l'Europe le sait!*"

There was nothing left for me to urge; evidently nothing would disabuse the minds of my friends; they had heard the slander stated as a known fact, and therefore believed it. Princess Ourusov, indeed, consoled with me by saying:

"Of course as a loyal subject you cannot admit the truth; I quite understand that."

After a long delay Lord Rosebery at last appointed Sir Frank Lascelles to succeed Sir Robert Morier, but the Foreign Office forgot to inform Mr. Howard, the chargé d'affaires. He learned the news in March from two sources: the Russian Foreign Ministry, and Reuter's telegram in the Press.

Lord Rosebery was by this time Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone having resigned office, but the Russians did not relish the change, because they thought the new Premier was a Russophobe. This belief had arisen when he penned his Note about Batum in 1886, eight years earlier. That port was to have been a free one, but the Russians put a different construction on the agreement to suit their own convenience, just as the French seized the Ruhr in 1923, although the British Government considered this to be an illegal act, if carried out without our approval. So far from being a Russophobe, Lord Rosebery was in a sense a strong Russophile. He told me this, and added that he regarded the Emperor, Alexander III, and his

personality as the "most peaceful factors of the present position of Europe." Nothing, he said, could be more important or more desirable than that the destiny of Europe should depend so largely on such a man. Lord Rosebery had certainly convinced M. de Staal, then Russian Ambassador in London, and authorised me, at the time, in March 1894, to make no secret of his views, which undoubtedly had a very cheering reception in St. Petersburg.

In spite of the extraordinarily hospitable nature of the Russians, and the very pleasant terms on which I was with the Ministry of War—it was quite independent of the General Staff, whose chief, General Obruchev, was Anglophobe—it was not to be expected that my movements and associations would not be followed very carefully by the authorities. To endeavour to hoodwink them would, of course, have been the height of folly, and I was very careful to give no ground for complaint. When I had been a year in Russia the General Staff concluded, at last, that it would have to take the first step. My apartment was in a house adjoining the Austrian Embassy, and one morning a visitor was shown in.

He was a captain on the General Staff, judging by his uniform, and came to business at once by enquiring whether he could sell me secret information. On my explaining that, even were I disposed to enter into this kind of traffic, and so abuse the trust of the authorities, there was nothing secret of importance which would interest my Government, he suggested various things : among others he mentioned that the strength of the Russian Army was jealously guarded, and was somewhat taken aback when told that the little book about it could be obtained very easily—which was not quite the case. Failing in his efforts about the army he then said that he had valuable information about the fleet, and its early expansion. I replied that my knowledge of naval matters was nil, but that, after all, not even Russia could stamp ships out of the water, or naval fortresses out of the ground ; in fact, I had neither the desire nor the intention of entering into any illicit bargain whatsoever.

He had, at last, to give it up, and departed. While he went down the front staircase I followed along the back one; he called a vehicle and, unseen by him, so did I. As I surmised he went straight to the offices of the General Staff, and gave me, it was to be hoped, a good character. The whole thing was doubtless a trap; if fallen into it would have quickly resulted in my discomfiture and removal, nor would this have been the first catastrophe of the kind to befall a British military attaché.

A few days afterwards, in conversation with a very charming young friend, Countess Rüdiger—a lady-in-waiting on the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna, the wife of the Grand Duke Vladimir, Commander-in-Chief of the St. Petersburg military district—she was talking about officers in my position, and said that, of course, although I was an actual spy, I need not take any offence at that for two reasons: one was that I could not help myself, while the other reason lay in the fact that all Russian military attachés were spies and, like me, were watched accordingly.

She really meant to give me a hint to be careful, and my visitor's call may easily have been discussed at the Imperial table. The Grand Duke Vladimir was somewhat dour. I had not intended, during the summer of 1894, living near the training camp; perhaps it was just as well, because my young friend told me she had heard that this was not appreciated.

Society was also apt to be *méchante*: there was an instance of this tendency about the same date—March 1894. The Yacht Club, the most exclusive in the capital, was a very pleasant place, and money was, for the Russian members, no object. Coffee-room bills were supposed to be rendered weekly, but the steward, unless a member should press for his account, liked to let them run on for months, when, of course, there was no check. He was believed to be a very wealthy man.

Play was very high all night long on frequent occasions. Baccarat was the most popular game, and settling was supposed to take place within a week, but Russians are very kind, and especially sympathetic towards a gambler. On this occasion Aziz Bey, the Turkish Military Attaché,



and very popular in St. Petersburg, had been recalled to take up an appointment at Constantinople. Before starting on his journey he had had a wonderful run of luck ; being a true gambler he had played up his winnings, and some people were very badly hit. Aziz was paid, and there was no suggestion that there had been anything wrong with his play until he had actually left Russia. Then, however, it was said openly that he had cheated. If he had done so, and had been detected, he would have been denounced on the spot.

The naval attaché, Captain Egerton, had been unable to remain long in Russia, so I always endeavoured to assist him if possible. Somehow or another I discovered that the Russians had got hold of our cordite ; our experimental authorities had met with various difficulties in the way of producing a smokeless explosive suitable for all climates, and, having at last got one, they were naturally desirous of keeping its ingredients a secret.

As a matter of fact, we were late in the field in powder and high explosive problems : in 1887 the French had their *mélinite*, supposed to be an absolute secret as regards its composition, but I showed some to Lord Wolseley in 1888 ; a German chemist, living in Wales, had large contracts with the French War Office for this substance, and had given me a bottleful. This chemist told me that our people were then on the wrong track, and that their experiments all resulted in too high a proportion of moisture. Lord Wolseley sent for General Sir H. Alderson, our principal artillery expert, and questioned him on the subject. The best that Alderson could answer was that it was hoped shortly to produce a reliable British explosive, but a considerable time elapsed before the hope materialised.

To show how safe *mélinite* was, so long as it was not detonated, I poured some on a sheet of paper on Lord Wolseley's desk, took a match, and was just going to set it alight when he assured me this was unnecessary : he would take my word for it. I had not heard then that he had lost the sight of one eye, and wisely declined to risk becoming blind in the other.

When Egerton heard from me about cordite being in

Russian hands he, of course, informed the Admiralty, which was greatly excited, and enquiries on its part showed that my information was correct.

Count Shouvalov, a general officer commanding a rifle battalion of the Imperial Guard, an independent unit—all regiments and special battalions in the Guards were commanded by generals—was a friend of mine, and he told me once that two military clerks had been detected selling copies of railway mobilisation tables to the Austrians, and had been shot in consequence. The death penalty was inflicted in Russia only for high treason or for military offences. Shouvalov told me that the authorities would be sure to lay a trap for me, and laughed when I recounted my adventure with the officer from the General Staff.

Meanwhile the War Office in London looked upon me with favourable eyes, and General Sir Reginald Gipps, the Military Secretary, wrote to congratulate me on the “able manner” in which my work was being done. My apologies for mentioning this, but it will be seen later that one can also fall into disfavour.

Being anxious to learn as much as I could about the various sections of the inhabitants I was glad to meet a very pleasant university student. He told me that, being in a hurry to improve their lot, he and his friends were ardent revolutionaries. He appeared to be a very mild-tempered youth from the peasant class, who had been able to attend one of the Russian seats of learning. Clever and well read—he knew all about Herbert Spencer and other great philosophers—he had no mind, on the completion of his course, to return to the sordid life, which he had quitted. His difficulty, however, like that of his friends, was that almost the only chance for people in his position, destitute of capital, to get on in the world was to procure some appointment in the public service, and the supply of applicants largely exceeded the demand. Once in it the possibilities were immense: the late Count Witte, who rose to be, for a time at least, the most powerful man in Russia, started his career as a junior subordinate on the railways.

My young acquaintance was perfectly candid: he said

that the illiterate condition of the inhabitants rendered them unfit for universal suffrage, but, well aware as he was of the general state of corruption in official life, he and his friends wanted a revolution in order that they might share the spoils. He told me, what I had often heard, that the Russian universities were hotbeds of revolutionary propaganda. It is curious that an autocratic Government should have been in favour of the expansion of seats of learning, which fomented these ideas, while ignoring the need for general elementary education; of course, the professorial staffs were expected to use every means at their disposal to eradicate them.

With reference to this fact my student told me that he had never heard of them acting as *agents provocateurs*, and that there was no need for them to do so, because there were always plenty of real plots. The fact is that Peter the Great had set the Russian clock some centuries in advance of the real time. Hence the paradoxical result: great numbers of youths were encouraged to study philosophy and political economy, but were forbidden to attempt to apply their knowledge. Consequently the catastrophe of March 1917 was absolutely certain to occur. Its actual date was impossible to foretell, but a letter of mine, written on February 2nd, 1898, when the might and prestige of Russia appeared to be greater than ever, states my belief that "the whole existing system will be swept away in a perfect torrent of blood." Yet the Russian statesmen who actually brought about the Revolution were persuaded that everything would go smoothly, and develop rapidly into a system analogous to our own, in a land where the aristocracy quite honestly believed that nobody outside its ranks counted!

Meanwhile, the question of the "Yellow Peril" began to be bruited in Russia; when the German Emperor, William II, brought it into the limelight, a good deal of ridicule was poured upon him, but in March 1894, General Richter, the Chief of the Russian ruler's Military Household, expressing the hope that our respective difficulties in Asia might be smoothed away, told me what the opinion was at Court, namely, that Russia and England would

very likely be obliged to stand together ere long in order to resist the expansion of China. At that time Japan was not considered seriously.

Lord Kimberley had succeeded Lord Rosebery as Foreign Minister, and was soon confronted with a Russian *ballon d'essai*, in connection with the delimitation problem in Central Asia. M. de Staal, the Russian Ambassador in London, suggested to him that the Muscovite frontier, east of Lake Victoria, should descend to Chilob, and then run, via the Baiyik Pass, to Aktash. The Foreign Secretary asked Lord Rosebery what he was to reply, and the Prime Minister told him the plan was so different from that proposed in the Russian scheme for a neutral zone that he, Lord Rosebery, was confident the new suggestion was a joke on the part of M. de Staal ! Perhaps His Excellency had made a mistake in good faith, for he was not a very good geographer concerning Asiatic affairs ; I think they bored him.

Russian diplomacy was, as in other countries, very stupid at times. In 1894 the Finns were already dreading the abolition of their privileges. All of them, whom I had met, loathed the Russians. They did not then aspire to independence, but merely desired to remain as during the preceding eighty years, namely, a Grand Duchy with their own Government. M. Pobedonotsov, the Procurator of the Holy Synod at St. Petersburg, was a religious bigot, and the Finns, who are Lutherans, saw his writing on the wall which materialised a few years afterwards. Finland was prosperous, a good trader, had her own coinage, and, what was very important, had provided the Russian Navy with its best, indeed its only, real seamen. Yet the authorities could not leave her alone. Possibly the assassination of President Carnot, in June 1894, stimulated the zeal of the authorities in the capital.

I happened to be in England just after this tragic event, and the Duke of Cambridge, in discussing it with me, said :

“ Any person who says he or she is an anarchist should be treated as a lunatic, because nothing annoys a sane individual so much as to be dealt with as a madman.”



It was then that Lord Kimberley wished to see me. A very pleasant man, he had been at the India Office, and, before that, at St. Petersburg after the Crimean War. It had been understood that he wished to question me on various subjects, but, although the interview was a fairly long one, practically no opportunity was afforded to me of getting in a word. He was a great talker, and told me a good deal about Russia as he read her. He also spoke to me, in a very mysterious manner, about the travels of "some one" in Asia. They were very important, so much so that he thought it best to mention no name, and was not, apparently, pleasantly surprised when I told him he was referring to Mr. Sykes, a subaltern in the Queen's Bays, and still less so on hearing that the Russians knew all about him, and had informed me. He never sent for me again during the remainder of his period of office.

Twelve months had elapsed between Morier's departure from St. Petersburg and the advent of Sir Frank Lascelles in July 1894. The Duke of Cambridge had told me that he had a charming personality, and so it proved. He presented his credentials to Alexander III a week after his arrival. There was a legend that a new ambassador brought with him a new personnel, so we juniors all went down to Peterhoff to be presented again, when the Emperor, who disliked speaking French, tested my knowledge of his own tongue. Sir Frank was a delightful chief, and, in diplomacy, honest to the core. The terms on which we commenced and continued—both in Russia and in Germany afterwards—will be understood from the following remark, which he made to me, when we were dining together immediately after his arrival:

"You must see and hear many things, and I hope you will always tell me if you think I am going wrong, although I may not, of course, agree with you."

This expresses His Excellency's character, and he then said that the Duke of Cambridge had spoken very kindly indeed about me in London. Just at this time Fortune gave me a special smile: the Foreign Office was aware that St. Petersburg was a costly place, and Sir Thomas Sanderson wrote to say that a special money allowance had been

granted to me. From my experience of eight years under it the Foreign Office was always the best and kindest of masters.

The Princess of Wales and her two daughters arrived on August 3rd, 1894, in order to attend the wedding of the Grand Duchess Xenia and the Grand Duke Alexander Michaelovich, her cousin—she was daughter of the Emperor and sister to Nicholas II—at Peterhoff. The bridal pair left in a carriage for Ropsha, a few miles distant, and we heard afterwards of what the superstitious considered a bad omen: on their way thither the vehicle fell into a ditch, but nobody was hurt.

Matters were proceeding quietly in the official world when the British Embassy was startled into activity by a telegram from Lord Kimberley stating that one of the Russian stormy petrels, Major-General Ionov, had set out on a new Pamir expedition, accompanied by three hundred troops!

## CHAPTER VII

A FORCE of less than two companies of infantry could not, of course, threaten India ; indeed, an expedition, of which it was merely the advanced guard, must have been contemptibly small. By the way, this expression reminds me of a similar one used by the German Emperor in 1914. His words, properly translated, meant exactly what is written here, but the version, issued in order to lash our people to fury, was made to read as if our army was contemptible. Whatever his failings he would certainly never have used such language, for, in spite of its small size, he was a great admirer of it.

As regards this Pamir expedition it was the principle of the thing which upset London as much as anything else. It would have taken a great deal more than this to disturb the equanimity of Sir Frank Lascelles, who spoke to me about it. My opinion was that the troops in question were merely on their way to relieve a detachment already on the Murghab river, the border-line between Russians and Afghans, while Ionov was accompanying them in order to see things for himself. I attributed nothing serious to the move.

A fortnight after this telegram there arrived another, which caused the plot to thicken : it was a message from the Government of India, transmitted through the Foreign Office, to the effect that another disturber of the peace, Colonel Grombchevsky, a Pole, was on his way with two thousand men to the Kudara, a tributary of the Murghab. He was a celebrated traveller, and there was no reason why he should not undertake this journey, but, still remaining obstinate in my rôle of seer, the allegation about the two thousand troops made no impression upon me : I thought the Government of India had been frightened by alarmists. At any rate I could see no reason whatever why such a force,

neither large nor small, should be despatched on an adventure entailing all kinds of possibilities.

It was an article of faith with some diplomatists, but not with Morier or Lascelles, to regard as lies any official Russian statement, which it did not suit them to credit. In 1893 they had, apparently, some ground for this attitude: Captain Vannovsky, a son of the Minister of War, had been lent for service in Russian Central Asia, the hunting ground of ambitious young soldiers.

He was with the Pamir detachment in the Murghab area, and went off on a reconnoitring expedition, just about the time that I was appointed to St. Petersburg. A collision took place between the Russians and Afghans, with little damage to either side, but Vannovsky was said to have been accompanied by a hundred men, and to have entered Afghan territory, all of which disturbed our authorities.

The instructions from St. Petersburg were that the Russians should confine themselves to the right bank of the Murghab, but it was not always easy to carry them out, because the Amir's subjects crossed over to it sometimes, and pillaged the inhabitants, who asked the Russians for protection and food. It was not suggested that His Highness knew of these occurrences, but his Governor of Shignan and Roshan had a salary of only about £500 yearly, which was paid at decidedly irregular intervals. Like other Orientals, therefore, he had to eke out his pay in other ways.

Vannovsky had not, however, a hundred soldiers: his detachment consisted of nine Cossacks, two riflemen, a hospital assistant, and Second-Captain Brjezitsky. They had the new rifle and smokeless powder. Brjezitsky had a small white tent, which happened to be pitched at the time of the encounter, and, after the fray, this was found to be riddled with bullets: the Afghans, knowing nothing about the smokeless powder, had thought the Russians were firing from inside the tent. It was often easy for me to check the truth of statements because, as in this instance, Brjezitsky showed me his diary afterwards, which had been written up daily long before a British military



attaché had been permitted to travel in Central Asia, so that it could not have been compiled for my edification.

The whole business was really annoying for the Russian authorities, and, as Baron Vrevsky, the Governor-General of Turkestan, told me afterwards, if there had arisen serious trouble between England and Russia over the incident "we here on the spot would have had to endure the disagreeable consequences." He and his subordinates did not relish the presence of the Minister's son, whose father naturally made the best of the business by reprimanding and promoting his boy.

In the meantime—August 1894—I was also occupied by the summer manœuvres near the capital. The two daughters of the Princess of Wales also were riding about ; Princess Maud—now the very charming Queen of Norway—not being altogether satisfied with the foreign breakfast of coffee and rolls used to carry a supply of chocolate to sustain her until the big midday meal.

The health of the Emperor, Alexander III, began to suffer about this time, and he looked quite ill ; a few days afterwards some other manœuvres, which had been planned to take place on a very large scale in the neighbourhood of Smolensk, were put off altogether. The Court was also worried by the fact that about a score of French anarchists had got into Russia, and only ten of them had been captured. The French Military Attaché, Moulin, had this from both the French and Russian Ministries of War.

At manœuvres and on many other occasions it would have been quite a simple matter to assassinate the Emperor ; talking about this one day with the Prefect of St. Petersburg, he said this was quite true, but experience showed that a potential murderer usually disliked risking his own skin, and being torn to pieces by an infuriated crowd.

I had been "salting" the ground with the object of obtaining permission to travel in Russian Central Asia, hitherto closed to British military attachés. Unofficial individuals had been allowed occasionally to travel there ; Lord Dunmore, as already mentioned, was one of them, and the Russians had given him a copy of their latest map of the Pamir region ; being a purely geographical

work it was not confidential, but we were more secretive in some ways. We had also prepared a similar map: it was not so good as the Russian one, partly because our cartographers were not always trained men, and partly because the Russians knew a good deal more detail than we did. They were, however, all loud in praise of Colonel (now Sir Francis) Younghusband's work in this respect, and the greatest Anglophobes among them were fascinated by his charming personality: they told me so.

My idea was to give the Minister of War a copy of our secret Pamir map as a token of good faith, and then ask for leave to visit Turkestan. The first obstacle was the unwillingness of the British War Office to fall in with my suggestion, unless the Russians should give us at least a *quid pro quo* and, for choice, something more valuable. This seemed to me to be scarcely fair, as they had already presented Lord Dunmore with their map, which, as they surmised correctly, he passed on to the Intelligence Division. My next step therefore was to execute a flank movement by laying the matter directly before Sir Thomas Sanderson at the Foreign Office, who immediately extracted a copy from the War Office and sent it to me. Simultaneously, however, a letter from this Department came, directing me not to part with it except, so to say, at a profit.

All this had commenced before we heard of Ionov's expedition, and our map reached me just at the very time that Grombchevsky was stated to be marching with a couple of thousand troops. A definite report also came from the Government of India that Ionov's men had attacked the Afghans on the Shakh-Dara on August 9th. I stated my belief that, if the Russians had been the aggressors, their action had not been premeditated by St. Petersburg or by Baron Vrevsky, the Governor-General of Turkestan, Ionov's superior. The desirability of getting to the bottom, on the spot, of these alarms and excursions increased therefore in urgency, and Sir Frank Lascelles entirely agreed with me. The question was: Could this be done?

On September 1st I called upon General Vannovsky by appointment. He was very pleased indeed to be given

our Pamir map, and described the recent Russo-Afghan conflict in practically precisely the same terms as used by me to Sir Frank a couple of days previously. But he told me more : he said that, about a fortnight before my visit, he had received a telegram from Vrevsky, stating that some of Ionov's troops were going in the direction of Shignan, and that he had ordered them to retrace their steps. The Minister added that he had previously instructed the Governor-General to forbid excursions into unauthorised territory, and had been astonished to hear of the late fracas. He went on to say that the craze for decorations was often at the bottom of these escapades, and that it was difficult to control young men so far away.

I remarked : " Perhaps General Ionov thought a little pressure would . . . "

" No," interrupted the Minister, " I do not think he is the author of the row ; he has been three years out there, and knows the views of the authorities here, which are that disputed territory is not to be entered while these conversations are going on. Reports had, however, reached our troops on the Murghab that the Afghans were causing the inhabitants to evacuate the right bank of the Oxus, but our orders are that a conflict is to be avoided pending these negotiations. Some days may, of course, elapse before the advanced posts can receive fresh instructions, and it may be difficult to get at Ionov."

Vannovsky said, regarding the report that more Russian troops were making for the Murghab, that " our forces are relieved there yearly, and the old and new bodies remain together for from four to six weeks or so."

" Of course," I replied, " you always have advanced posts south of the Murghab ? "

" Yes," was his answer, " and it is they who are at the bottom of this trouble. Small parties move about, and their officers want decorations. It was the same with my son out there last year : he took a dozen men on a reconnaissance and, wanting to distinguish himself, fought a battle, which lasted half a day, but no Russian was hurt. He wanted to try the new rifle, and the Afghans, seeing

men dropping while no smoke was visible, thought a miracle was occurring, and would not advance."

Now or never, thought I, and enquired :

"Will Your Excellency permit me to make a tour in Central Asia ?"

"Oh, so you want to go there ?" he replied, laughing.

"Very well, you shall ; you are the accredited military agent here of England ; I believe you will be fair, and I trust you, without asking for any assurance, to do nothing improper."

He meant, of course, that I would not attempt to enter into any relations with the natives in Transcaspia or farther east. His Excellency was also of the opinion that it was a blessing for the negotiations to be in the hands of our respective Foreign Offices, as the Government of India became so nervous if a Russian battalion or even a company moved in Central Asia. In conclusion the Minister said :

"I believe you will go with an open mind, that your visit will diminish difficulties and have a good result."

As regards our information that Russian troops were at Revak on the Oxus, he remarked that he did not think this possible, as they had positive orders not to go there ; he thought this report emanated from the fact that they had advanced posts on the Ghund, a score of miles or so south of the Murghab. My interview had been therefore a complete success, and the ambassador was pleased to observe that it was "a feather" in my cap. Not everybody was pleased : when I returned from my tour the principal Russian journal, the *Novoe Vremya*, in a leading article, criticised the Minister of War sharply, and the Censor must have agreed with it, because nothing happened to the editor, M. Suvorin. The *Morning Post*, on the other hand, was very complimentary about my journey, and certainly showed more sense than its contemporary.

In answer to Sir Frank's enquiry about the Foreign Minister, M. de Giers, I said that, not having known him, my opinion would be worthless, but I quoted Morier as a firm believer in him. "Yes," replied the ambassador, "I know that ; but White, at Constantinople, told me



Giers is as cunning a fox as they make them." We agreed that Morier had very likely terrorised Giers over his ultimatum about passports.

I left St. Petersburg on September 15th, 1894, with no premonition that Russia would have a new autocrat before my return. My route lay through Batum, Tiflis, Baku and Transcaspia, and it was soon evident that grave doubts had arisen, in some quarters, as to whether I would not be turned back on arriving at Baku. Mr. P. W. Stevens, our very able consul at Batum, could scarcely believe that official permission had been granted for my journey; he was sure that Baku would be my terminus. The Governor-General of the Caucasus, General Sheremetiev, and his second-in-command, Count Tatishev, at the capital, Tiflis, were aware of my coming, but evidently could not understand how the Minister of War had brought himself to sanction a British military attaché touring Central Asia by himself. Everybody, however, was very nice and hospitable to me, both men and ladies.

Baku was reached on September 30th, and here an obstacle confronted me. It had certainly not been created by the Russian authorities, although the Governor-General of a huge province was very independent, and did not always accept the instructions from St. Petersburg about travellers; there were a hundred ways in which these orders might be set aside.

In this case there was nothing of the kind: I had learned, from General Sheremetiev at Tiflis, that the Emir of Bokhara was on his way home, and, as I was about to pass through his dominions, His Excellency thought it would be well for me to be presented to His Highness, who, however, begged to be excused on the ground that he was very busy with the preparations for his own journey; it was just as well, as I did not wish to have relations except with the Russians.

The obstacle at Baku was that the Emir had already engaged the whole of the accommodation in the steamer sailing on October 1st, and the shipping-clerk would not let me have even a second-class ticket. I thereupon called upon the Port Admiral, Sablin, who professed his





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JOURNEY IN CENTRAL ASIA, 1894  
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inability to do anything. Some people think that women's suffrage will prove to be the salvation of this country ; the fair sex is so often right where men are wrong, and so it was at Baku : getting nothing out of the admiral it looked as if my stay there might be a prolonged one ; it was true that there were no more Emirs due to sail eastwards, but pretexts for delay might be found until, sick of the whole thing, my visit to the Promised Land should be abandoned in disgust, for the admiral was independent of the Governor-General.

In the nick of time the admiral's wife entered the room. On explaining my predicament to her, she ordered her husband to telephone immediately to the shipping company for a second-class berth, so all was well ! But the commander of the steamer gave me a first-class cabin to myself : he always kept one in reserve. He was a Swede, a very interesting man, who, before he gave up the sea to go into steam, had been everywhere in deep-water sailing-ships, some of them British, which he liked best of all.

The Emir was a big, fat man. Accustomed as I was to the honours and salutes accorded in India to native princes, it was curious to see that no official notice whatever was taken of this potentate, the greatest native prince in the Russian Empire. None of the small Russian war craft at Baku even dipped an ensign. For some distance from the oil-port, Baku, the Caspian was a horrid, thick, yellow mass, a depressing sight. It was already manifest that Russia was not preparing anything out of the normal, because, on the Asiatic side, a barge did duty for a pier with a depth of eight feet of water. The commander told me that Krasnovodsk was a much better landing-place, but the railway had not then been extended to it, while our locality was silting up ; there was no dredger. A *coup de main* on India was certainly not to be undertaken in the near future !

The Transcaspian railway was, of course, of immense importance to Russia, but it was a single line, in only fair order, while the trains consisted of a very few second- and third-class carriages. Reserved accommodation would have been provided for me but for three facts : one was



that the Emir had hired a special train ; a spare coach was required for General Kouropatkin, the Governor-General of Transcaspia, in a day or two's time, and M. Yermolov, in the Ministry of Communications, was due shortly, and also wanted another special train, as that for the Emir could not be sent back in time from Bokhara. The line was very sparingly equipped, and was not able to carry considerable numbers of troops at one time : I discovered that it had less than 6,000 trucks.

I suppose the journey to Samarkand, the terminus then of the railway, was about as filthy and uncomfortable as it could well be ; this is not surprising in view of the general type of passenger. Any railway is, however, much faster than road transport, and the nine hundred miles or so to Samarkand were completed in sixty hours. My original intention had been to break my journey at Askhabad, the residence of Kouropatkin ; I was anxious to meet him, for he had already a great reputation. It occurred to me, however, that I had better make for my principal objective first, and see to what extent, if any, my prophecies had been accurate, or whether I was a broken bubble.

Having telegraphed beforehand my intention of halting at Askhabad, the Governor-General had sent an officer to meet me at the station, and to him I explained that circumstances compelled me to defer my visit, especially as he had the Emir on his hands for a parade. I also wrote to Kouropatkin. After leaving Askhabad a captain in charge of the train asked me whether I had permission to travel on the line, but quickly satisfied himself as to my identity. The country was dreary enough, but Geok Tepe must have been a hard nut for the Russians to crack. It was a series of mud forts, east of Askhabad, capable of accommodating several thousand men, was impervious to field artillery of those days, and had an excellent field of fire. The wooden bridge, about four miles long, over the Oxus at Chardjui was frail, and the train speed was reduced to about three miles an hour.

Samarkand, then the terminus of the railway, has extremely interesting historical traditions : Tamerlane,

and a brother of the Prophet, are buried there, while the blue-tiled buildings were well worth a journey to see; unfortunately, the Russians, unlike our authorities in India, did not trouble to keep them in repair, or even to prevent intentional dilapidations by people pulling out pieces of the walls for building purposes.

To get to Tashkent a light, four-wheeled vehicle, drawn by ponies, was necessary. The number of animals at each post-station being limited, not only ordinary but likewise official travellers were often subject to long delays on the way, the mails, of course, being the first consideration. Count Rostovtsov, the Governor of the Samarkand Province, gave me, however, a special order for ponies, which I thus obtained out of my turn.

Rostovtsov knew about the recent Russo-Afghan collision. The difficulty was that, if the Russians should withdraw their advanced posts, the Afghans would pillage the native inhabitants, but the Governor said that such incidents ought not to occur, and he seemed to think, unlike the Minister of War, that General Ionov had ordered this little expedition, but then, this officer was by no means, as I soon learned, universally popular.

A couple of days at Samarkand sufficed; changing ponies every few miles my tarantass covered the two hundred miles or so to Tashkent in thirty-eight hours, very good going indeed considering the time lost at the post-stations. There were no bridges: the Zarafshan, near Samarkand, about a quarter of a mile wide, was swift and the ford devious, but there was a most efficient ferry—which the Russians call an “auto-flyer”—over the Syr Daria, worked by one man at the rudder: by an ingenious combination of hawsers, and barges moored in line down-stream, the ferry is swung across and then tied up to the other bank.

It was too late to pay my respects to Baron Vrevsky on the night of my arrival, and, as he was just going out when I called on the following morning, I merely left a card, whereupon he immediately sent an officer to invite me to dinner on the same evening, when the Chino-Japanese War was the principal topic of conversation.

Opinions were divided as to the ultimate result, the Governor-General, in a minority of one, expressing his belief that China would eventually break up, and, perhaps, be partitioned like Africa, Russia and England taking the lions' shares. It was a very pleasant evening and the guests talked freely, no secret being made of the survey in progress for extending the railway from Samarkand to Tashkent and Khojent.

On the following day another invitation to dinner came, when I met a M. Marten, an observant Swedish traveller. Vrevsky told me that his five years' term of office would soon expire; he had seen a good many changes: the natives in his territory were very pacific, but there were also about twenty thousand Russian peasant colonists—not exiles—of bad class; prior to the advent of these people, said the Governor-General, nobody locked up his house at night, but the immigrants were teaching the indigenous population bad habits, such as theft; no murders had occurred in his time, but he anticipated that, by the year 1915 or so, matters would have become much worse in all respects, owing to the benefits of Western civilisation!

I spent ten days at Tashkent, and extremely interesting they were. It was obvious from the outset that Baron Vrevsky was neither a schemer nor a firebrand. He mentioned that the railway to his capital would have come from Orenburg but for strategical reasons. His province, Fergana, only required irrigation to render Russia independent of foreign cotton; speaking generally, the potential wealth of Russia is incalculable.

My visit happened to coincide with His Excellency's military inspections, and he was good enough to invite me to accompany him. Accustomed to the great number of camp followers allotted to troops, British and Indian, in India, it was interesting to note that those of Russia did everything for themselves, a great economy in man and beast, which also rendered them much more independent in the field.

Unlike our system, which is said to make it difficult if not impossible for anybody to see even a minor official,

Vrevsky set apart one day in every week when the humblest native could approach him, nor was this excellent plan confined to him alone ; the highest Russian officials everywhere were usually easy of access whether they granted petitions or not.

We discussed freely the Russo-Afghan problem. Like most Russians the Governor-General was confident that trouble would always be liable to occur so long as the Anglo-Russian frontier should not be conterminous. "If," he said, "we do not require buffer states elsewhere, why should one be necessary here, where both sides must then often be kept in the dark as to what is going on in the buffer?" He had assured Lord Dunmore, who spoke to him about British apprehensions concerning India, that the Emperor was not "a brigand like Tamerlane, or Baber." His Excellency had, of course, read Sir Charles MacGregor's work, and characterised that portion of it which concerned Russian designs on India as "rubbish." While he thought nothing of some occasional shooting—"the Afghans are always letting off their guns"—he did think it "important" that they should not be permitted to return to the right bank of the Oxus (Ab-i-Panja) in Roshan and Shignan, and pillage what little there was to pillage without the Russians being allowed to protect the inhabitants. The orders to the Russian troops on the Murghab were that advanced posts were to be sent as far as the Oxus, provided, however, that no Afghan soldiery was encountered.

The situation was now pretty clear to me : our Governments had agreed in principle that Roshan and Shignan, on the right bank of the Oxus, were to be Russian, and peaceable men like Vrevsky considered that this territory should be evacuated by the Amir's troops without waiting for the delimitation of the frontier east of Lake Victoria.

All that came to my knowledge at Tashkent strengthened my belief in my St. Petersburg prophecies, which were corroborated by further information. Captain Kuznetsov, on the General Staff of the Governor-General, had been with the first Pamir detachment despatched after Ionov had been reconnoitring, and had arrested



Sir F. Younghusband. He was amused to hear the report about Grombchevsky and his two thousand men : that distinguished traveller was settled down as District Officer at Osh, the last town nearest to the Pamirs ; he had only been a short time on the Murghab during the summer of 1894, nor could he have started on his alleged expedition with two thousand troops, one excellent reason being that they could not have been fed.

Kuznetsov also told me that the Amir's men were not regular soldiers but a kind of militia or, rather, brigands, for whom some Afghan officer or another received a meagre lump sum to equip and maintain. Of this amount he would pocket at least half, so that pillage was indispensable for the men. Occasionally a senior officer would visit them, but, under the circumstances, it was very difficult if not impossible for the Amir to control these gentry.

Another piece of news, of great importance as showing the good faith of the Russian authorities, was that the redoubtable Ionov was to be transferred to Kerki, hundreds of miles to the west in Transcaspia, which would be a horrid shock for him.

An incident occurred which marked the contrast between British and Russian financial methods. The cheque was practically unknown in Russia, and, if used at all, was only good for five days, and was payable to bearer, but the Imperial State Bank in the Russian capital directed its branch at Tashkent to cash an English one for me. When I took it to the manager he told me that it was the first time, during his experience of twenty years, that he had ever handled such a document, and desired me to write out, in Russian, on the back of it a receipt in full, as Messrs. Cox & Co. would not otherwise honour it.

Having examined and cross-examined numbers of people, from the Governor-General downwards, until they must have been thoroughly weary of my presence—although they certainly did not show it—my departure for Margilan and Osh took place on October 18th. To Khojent, my first halt, was a short drive of fourteen hours ; I spent a night there, and reached Khokand late the next day, when I learned of the Emperor's dangerous

illness, and attended a service in the fort praying for his restoration to health. After a couple of days at Khokand I went on to Margilan, accompanied by a "Djigit" or native irregular, which the Governor told me was necessary to ensure my safety on the road, although nothing alarming was seen. General Povalo-Shveikovsky, the ruler of the Margilan region, repeated what had been told me at Tashkent, namely, that the new Pamir detachment consisted of one company of infantry, whereas its predecessors had two, besides, in each case, some Cossacks. Its commander, Captain Skersky, was accompanied by his wife. On enquiring what he thought of the revised and improved Indian plans of mobilisation, which were generally known, he replied :

"As long as you cannot arm your native troops with the latest rifle I care nothing for your plans : they are worthless, for your native regiments could not stand against ours, being less efficiently equipped."

This defect was, not long afterwards, remedied, but the general opinion among Russians was that they could reach Cabul sooner than we could, because the route was easier and the troops would not be, as in our case, embarrassed by native followers. In one respect the Russian soldier of those days had a great advantage over his British comrade : all over the empire every barrack had its separate dining-room, and the rations were both excellent and abundant. He was still better off in the field, because his food was cooked on the march, and was timed to be ready for consumption at any specified hour.

This was quite simple : the Russians had field kitchens, each drawn by a horse. It was such a sensible arrangement that, on my return to St. Petersburg, I asked for authority to purchase one capable of cooking for a hundred and fifty or two hundred men at one time. The cost was about £60, but the War Office would not hear of such a piece of extravagance. It was suggested to me to try and extract one as a free gift, but such an unusual request was impossible. We went on in the same way for years afterwards, so that, during the war in South Africa, hungry troops might reach their destination hours

before their baggage. Such parsimony seems almost incredible.

The Russians had certainly done a great deal for Turkestan: in the Margilan district, for instance, there was scarcely a tree to be seen sixteen years before my arrival, when a German forester, Herr Ottendorf, was placed in charge with admirable results. Vast tracts could also be made available for growing cotton, but in 1894 the lack of rail transport made the cost of the product prohibitive. It was, in my experience, very unusual to find a British trader travelling in the Russian Empire, but I met a young one, Mr. Chaworth, at Margilan, who said that Fergana cotton was better than Persian, and he classed it as "good middling" in comparison with the American variety. My stay of five days at Margilan was very interesting, because the Governor was so very frank in his criticisms. We had plenty of time to argue, as I was a guest at his residence. One of his remarks was very much to the point :

"Your people, especially the Indian Government, are always complaining about our advance, but how do you think the seizure of Hunza and Nagar appeals to us?"

Of course, my only possible answer was that it had been brought about owing to Russian intrigues, unauthorised, it may be, but improper. We agreed to differ: he was a most pleasant host. From Margilan to Osh, 3,050 feet above sea level, was an easy drive of eleven hours. Owing to the lateness of my arrival, my call upon Colonel Grombchevsky had to be postponed until the following morning. He had always interested me very much, and I hoped he would be affable, but it was known that he was prejudiced against Englishmen. He impressed me very favourably indeed at our first interview, and time only served to strengthen this opinion. Complete frankness, coupled with a rich sense of humour, were the chief characteristics of this physically and mentally fine man, now, I am truly sorry to hear, in dire straits.

By great good luck half of the Pamir detachment, which had been relieved, marched into Osh on the day after my arrival. It had come from the Murghab, a distance of

about two hundred and fifty miles, at the usual rate of seventeen miles daily, so that it could not, by any possibility, have been stage-managed for my benefit. The strength was one hundred and thirty-seven infantry, forty Cossacks, and about eighty transport ponies. They had a great reception ; there was a Church parade, I made a little speech to the detachment and drank its health, and this was followed by lusty cheers for the Empress of India. Nothing was wanting to make the whole ceremony a fine success, and the other company arrived on the following day. It was at Osh that I met Captain Brzezitsky who, as already mentioned, gave me his diary to read. He had been with Ionov when the latter arrested Young-husband in the Pamirs, in 1891, and liked our gallant compatriot better than any other British traveller he had ever met.

Captain Zaitsev, the commander of the Pamir detachment which had just been relieved, was stationed at Osh ; he was a very pleasant, quiet man, and gave me his diaries to study. The Russo-Afghan collision of August, 1894, which had caused so much excitement in London and Simla, had been, as I surmised, purely accidental. When Zaitsev wrote up his diary daily, there had been no idea that a British military attaché would visit Central Asia, so that, to put it on the lowest plane, he would have had no reason whatever to concoct a false story.

This is what had happened : in the spring of 1894 the Afghans, knowing that Shignan and Roshan, on the right bank of the Oxus, were to be ceded to Russia, told Zaitsev that they would not demand any fresh taxes from the inhabitants—the Russians had supplied about sixty of these with food—but would merely collect the arrears. They took everything, and Zaitsev showed me numbers of letters from these unfortunate people. My acquaintance with Oriental tongues enabled me to assimilate their sense. He replied that he was forbidden to correspond with the Amir's representatives, and fresh complaints came in, until, in August 1894, the Afghan Governor told him that his men would keep to the left bank of the Oxus, whereupon Zaitsev withdrew his advanced posts. The Afghans,



however, recrossed the stream, and a Russian patrol, under Captain Skersky, was sent to investigate.

This party consisted of fifteen infantry and twenty Cossacks, the Afghans being then on their own bank: their commander invited Skersky to pay him a friendly visit, and he accordingly set out, accompanied by five men. Just as they reached a rickety footbridge, previously broken by the Afghans, these fired a volley. They said afterwards that it was some of the local inhabitants, standing around, who had fired, but, when this fiction was exposed, the shooting was put down to the great difficulty of maintaining discipline.

Skersky, instead of returning the fire, withdrew his men about three miles, halting on some rising ground, the Afghans following and letting off some occasional shots. The incident was reported promptly to Ionov, who ordered Skersky not to retire before natives, and warned the Amir's commander that any fresh attack would entail immediate reprisals. The Afghans thereupon withdrew to their own bank, and the Russians, from first to last, had not fired a shot.

Osh is to Russia what Gilgit is to India. Grombchevsky was very sore with the Government of India: his inquisitive travels had landed him in a position of great difficulty a few years previously, before the Russians sent out their first Pamir expedition: he had lost a score of ponies from starvation, and appealed for permission to enter Kashmir or to cross the Hindu Kush in order to procure supplies. Lord Lansdowne was Viceroy, and the Government of India, being suspicious, refused the request; Grombchevsky had a very narrow escape, he told me. Like all his other countrymen who had met Sir F. Younghusband, he admired and liked him immensely. Grombchevsky had several narrow escapes during his career: one was when he was visiting Kanjut in 1888. The Khan was drunk as well as suffering from fever, so my friend gave him some quinine pills. When the drug caused his head to swim His Highness thought he was poisoned, and matters looked very serious indeed when Grombchevsky saved the situation by taking a much larger dose himself.

His opinion of the Foreign Minister, Giers, was the same as that formed by Sir William White, namely, that he was a cunning, double-dealing man. This confirmed therefore my opinion that Morier really had terrorised Giers into not attempting, as the Americans say, to double-cross His Excellency. Grombchevsky had paid a brief visit to the Pamir region shortly before my arrival at Osh ; he would not, in any event, have remained there because, having become an administrative official, he would have been subordinate to the captain commanding the detachment, as the district was under martial law. In his position he could not have gone with twenty, to say nothing of two thousand, soldiers, quite apart from the impossibility of feeding a considerable number.

I had not intended going farther than Osh until Grombchevsky suggested that I should continue my rambles into the mountains ; this would, he said, give me some useful "espionage" work, and enable me to report on a road which he had made from that place ; this road, he said, could only have one object, namely, to facilitate the invasion of India ! Colonel Grombchevsky had twitted me about the inefficiency of my secret service department, when he learned that the existence of this road was unknown to me, although it had been constructed more than a year previously, at a cost of about £6,000. It was evident therefore that the engineering difficulties could not have been great, but the road must certainly facilitate the movements of troops and their baggage.

The prospect was an attractive one, but it seemed to me that the trip ought not to be undertaken without the express permission of Baron Vrevsky. His Excellency agreed readily, subject only to the condition that I would promise to retrace my steps immediately if snow was likely to fall heavily, as he did not wish my bones to remain in the hills.

Grombchevsky's assistance was invaluable, as he at once collected a small caravan of riding and baggage ponies with their native attendants, a queer-looking crowd, but he knew them all well. M. Marten had also arrived at Osh, and asked me whether he might accompany me. It would be

pleasant to have a companion, but, as time was an object, I told him he would have to ride at a good pace. We started in the early morning of October 31st, being obliged to take furs, as the weather was getting cold: Grombchevsky had lent me a Cossack, a lance-corporal, to look after my escort, and to warn off any marauders: some outlaws might be in my neighbourhood. Marten and I drove the first twenty miles and then mounted, the road farther on not being suitable for a crazy vehicle.

On my way I saw General Ionov, returning from the Murghab: he evidently did not desire to meet me, so we just saluted and passed on. During my sojourn at Margilan no opportunity had been given me of meeting his wife, which I would have liked to have done, and I was, of course, very anxious to make his acquaintance. The road was not very good, for it took nearly five hours to cover the twenty miles from Osh. My next point was the post at Gulcha, twenty-seven miles farther on, which was reached in the dark at eight o'clock.

Gulcha was the last Russian post on the way to the Trans-Alai region; a troop of Cossacks was stationed there, and I found its commander engaged in carpentering with one of his men. He was a queer fellow, and—as the Americans say—fairly well “tanked.” My papers being all in order, he could not, however, detain me. The only difficulty had been crossing the ford, my first serious experience in that line, for the stream was full and rapid, besides being quite deep enough for the ponies, which had to swim for a few feet.

My objective was the Kizil Su, sixty-eight miles from Gulcha, which the Russian troops covered in three marches; Grombchevsky's road ended there, and we marched about twenty-seven miles daily in eight hours or so. As we ascended the mountains the weather got colder, and the surface of the rapid streams was frozen in the mornings. We kept a fire going all night, as there was some scrub and bush available for fuel, and, at 9,800 feet, the temperature was too cold to take off one's clothes, whereas, on descending another 1,000 feet, I felt quite comfortable while stripped for washing in hot water, when the ther-

mometer showed twenty-three degrees Fahrenheit and my towel was frozen hard in a few moments.

On one evening we encountered a few natives who sold me a sheep ; they were overwhelmed with joy when I paid the enormous sum of ten shillings for it. The animal was killed, skinned, and cooked in no time ; indeed, it is not much of an exaggeration to say that its last bleat was still echoing in the surrounding mountains when the skinning was finished. When the midday halt for food and rest was called on the following day I happened to notice where one of my men had put the remains of the mutton ; we all wore long, felt, thigh boots, and he produced, from inside his right one, a *gigot*, partly wrapped in a dirty piece of newspaper ; it was, of course, quite warm from having been so carefully stowed, and hunger is a very good sauce.

The Taldik Pass was the highest point on my journey : it is at the head of a defile, seven miles long, on a col, 11,800 feet high. M. Marten had been complaining of feeling unwell some time previously and, when we halted at the summit, he was violently sick ; people are affected in different ways, and the altitude did not trouble me in the least nor the others of my party. The descent towards the Kizil Su was quite as easy as the ascent had been, but the ponies always chose the edge of any precipice. The weather was perfect without a cloud in the sky when the summit was reached, and the country opened out into a plain 10,200 feet high, at the Kizil Su ; the view of Mount Kaufman, many miles distant, and 22,000 feet high, was magnificent.

This stream was my terminus. There were half a dozen small field works of the simplest description, and the route branched there : one fork leading south towards the Murghab and the Pamirski Post, while the other went east to Irkishtam and Kashgar. Near the Kizil Su, about a thousand Kirghiz ponies were grazing, but the pasturage was somewhat scanty. From this locality to the Murghab was nine days' march, for which I could not spare the time and, besides, practically all the information about Russian doings in that part of the world was already



in my hands, so the return march was commenced forthwith on November 3rd. There was a small monument at the summit of the Taldik Pass on which was an inscription to the effect that the road had been commenced on April 24th, and completed to the crest on July 1st, 1893—old style—that is to say, in sixty-eight days, a very remarkable piece of work. Provided the streams were not too full wheeled transport could travel along the entire route, stout wooden bridges having been constructed at points otherwise impracticable for it.

We got back to Gulcha in a couple of days, Marten feeling rather sore about his person. My Cossack, Timothy Oboukhov, was a capital fellow, and had been with the first Pamir detachment, so that he knew all about the route. I fulfilled his heart's desire by sending him a watch suitably inscribed. Some snow fell during the return journey, nothing to signify, but the passes might have been blocked any time thereafter.

The commandant at Gulcha was a little more affable and sober than when we had last met: he was repairing beds this time, and my first question to him was to enquire about the Emperor's health, as there was no telegraph in the direction of the Murghab. He replied that His Majesty was much about the same, and I completed my journey to Osh on the following afternoon, when I went immediately to call upon Grombchevsky. He began by asking my opinion of his road, and I could truthfully answer that it was a good one. He then made some remark about the *late* Emperor of Russia, which astounded me so much that, at first, I thought I had not heard him aright. It appeared, however, that His Majesty had died on November 1st, the day after my departure for the Kizil Su, and Grombchevsky, having telegraphed to the Cossack captain at Gulcha, on the 3rd, to send one of his men to inform me, had expected me back earlier.

Osh was and is a place of importance with a considerable trade; one could get three thousand pack ponies there in ten days in my time by stopping all caravans for Kashgar, as they got their passes from Grombchevsky, who told me that he had once penetrated to within twenty miles of

Gilgit. He gave me to read some lectures which he had delivered to the students at the Russian Staff College, and one of them related to the best means to annoy us on the Gilgit and Chitral side in the event of war. After perusing them my friend commented on England's grasping nature, and declared that we cannot bear to see another Power acquire any fresh territory; even if it has not occurred to us to take it for ourselves, we feel we have the best right to it the moment anybody else casts an eye upon it. Grombchevsky, however, was not the only person who has told me this; foreigners of other countries have said the same thing. I suppose it is because we have been such successful colonisers.

Leaving Osh and—with very sincere regret—my friend Grombchevsky after a stay of a couple of nights, Margilan was reached on November 8th, and, on the following morning, there was a memorial service for the late Emperor. General Ionov was present, and the Governor introduced me to him, when I expressed my great pleasure at meeting him. His reply was not exactly encouraging:

“It is on account of your complaints that I have been transferred to Kerki!”

He unbent, however, on my telling him that I had persistently declared my conviction that the Russians had not been the aggressors in the fracas of the preceding August. To this he answered that his instructions from the Governor-General had been most definite on no account to have a collision. Of course, I followed the usual custom of calling upon him on the same afternoon; feeling somewhat doubtful whether he would be “not at home,” my visit was timed just at the hour when he would probably be dining. This was the case; on my card being taken in he left his meal, refusing to let me wait, and we talked for one solid hour.

He had served for twenty-eight years in Turkestan, and naturally hated the idea of being buried in Transcaspia, but, to me, he was frankness personified, and delightful in his manner. He showed me his diary for August 1894, which completely corroborated what had been told me by Captain Zaitsev, the commander of the Pamir detachments,

and produced Captain Skersky's report of the collision. He had also taken several photographs of the locality, which helped to explain portions of his diary and the report.

The object of my journey—to get at the facts of the particular fracas, as well as to study the Central Asian situation on the spot with a free hand—had thus been completely attained; it had now become inconceivable even for alarmists to suggest that the whole of the Russian authorities in Turkestan, senior and junior, should have conspired together to throw dust in the British eye when not one of them, either in European or Asiatic Russia, had imagined that an English military attaché would be permitted to set foot in the forbidden territory.

The finishing touch to the canvas was given by Ionov himself during our interview: he mentioned that there had never been any question of Russian troops being despatched to the Pamir region until they had studied MacGregor's work, *The Defence of India*! Believing him, naturally enough, to represent the views of the British and Indian Governments, the Russians thought they might as well see what they could do. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ!*

## CHAPTER VIII

HAVING nothing more to do in Turkestan it was necessary for me to return quickly to St. Petersburg. Fortunately, I had omitted a stay in Transcaspia on my outward journey, as anything in that province could only be of academic interest, and Kouropatkin, the Governor-General, would, of course, understand my reasons for not halting at Askhabad while homeward bound.

Travelling eastward I had been twenty-five days going from the Caspian to Osh, whereas, on the westward journey, nine days sufficed. It may be mentioned that in Turkestan, as in other countries, the higher officials did not always pull well together: Baron Vrevsky told me that his subordinate, the Governor of Margilan, Povalov-Shveikovsky, was "very difficult"; the latter advised me to omit Tashkent on my return, and take a slightly shorter route, as the Governor-General would not, owing to the death of the Emperor, feel disposed to see me; Ionov did not appear to a *persona grata* with Grombchevsky or anybody else in high place, but Zaitsev and other junior officers, who had served with him in the Pamir region, liked him very much as a chief.

Vannovsky and Grombchevsky were both Poles, but the latter told me that the War Minister had become more Russian than the Russians, and disliked the great traveller, who looked upon his career as practically finished. It was therefore a source of great pleasure to me, after my return to St. Petersburg, to get Vannovsky interested in my friend, with the result that he was promoted to general officer's rank shortly afterwards. The personal animosities, which have been mentioned, did not in any way affect the facilities which were freely accorded to me on all hands. Vrevsky was very glad indeed to see me again; he was



delighted with the results of my journey, and signed a special order for me to have post ponies before anybody else, so I started for Samarkand immediately after dinner.

An amusing and, at the moment, a disconcerting incident occurred when I stopped to change ponies about twenty miles after leaving my kind host: the post-master was drunk, and said it would be two or three days before I could proceed. This would have been sufficiently aggravating under any circumstances, as we were in the desert, but, being in a hurry, and with the railway nearly two hundred miles distant, it was rather exasperating. There were plenty of ponies available, and no other travellers. Arguments, polite and other, had no effect; when the very special order, signed by the local autocrat himself, was produced, it elicited the reply:

"I care nothing for any Governor-General, and will tell him so if I see him. I am a Pole and a French subject, and no Russian can do anything to me!"

Fortunately, my reputation as regards liberality in tipping stood high, for each driver always told his successor what he had received, and, while I was still wrangling with the *starosta*, new ponies had been put in. The driver then called me, so I made a dash for the vehicle, pursued by the post-master, who was too slow, and off we drove while he cursed most fluently in ordering us to stop.

There was a slight railway accident on the Transcaspian line, which enabled me to see that the military engineers, who worked it, were not very efficient; having previously done some railway work on the London and North Western system in England, my experience in that direction came in useful. On embarking, the commander of my steamer, a Finn this time, who had served in British deep-water sailing-ships, told me a good deal about the speculation and inefficiency rife among the Russian portion of the company's staff. Like most of his countrymen, he was very apprehensive of the Russianising of Finland.

I reached St. Petersburg on November 25th, after an absence of ten weeks; the Emperor Alexander III had been buried on the 19th, and the marriage of his successor, Nicholas II, was fixed for the 26th.

On reporting myself to the ambassador it appeared that my rank had been raised, about three weeks previously, to that of temporary lieutenant-colonel; it was a very gracious act on the part of the Duke of Cambridge, but there was a fly in the ointment, because it meant reverting to my substantive rank of major at the expiration of my appointment. It would indeed be difficult for me to revisit Russia where officers were actually degraded occasionally; there was a story current about Skobelev's father, who got into some trouble and found himself serving under his own son, who was a martinet! There was no use, however, in anticipating evil, and the next thing to be done was to write my name in the book of His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales.

This elicited a command to present myself to him early on the following morning before the wedding ceremony. The Princess of Wales, the Duke of York, and the Duke of Edinburgh had also arrived. On being ushered into the Prince's room at the Anichkov Palace he welcomed me most kindly, and remarked that he thought we had not met before. Not until later did I remind him that we had met: eighteen years previously, on obtaining my commission, I attended a *Levéé* held by the Prince on behalf of the Queen, and being, of course, very young and anxious to do the right thing, my eyes watched carefully the movements of the officer in front of me. He was a distinguished admiral, and, as soon as His Royal Highness saw him, they shook hands warmly, and entered into a brief conversation. It occurred to me that my hand ought to be held out ready; my bow was returned, but the Prince continued to gaze over my head, from which I inferred, after hesitating for two or three seconds, that I had done the wrong thing, not for the last time!

The Duke of York—now King George—was with his father at the Anichkov Palace, and this was the first of many meetings, in every one of which I experienced nothing but the greatest kindness and consideration from both of them. They were intensely interested in my travels, and the Prince of Wales enquired whether something could not be done immediately to improve our relations with Russia,

after hearing that the August collision in Shignan had really been caused by the Afghans.

He was delighted at having been appointed Colonel-in-Chief of the Kiev Dragoons, and appreciated immensely the comfortable Russian uniform : " I can throw my arms about and do athletics in it." His Royal Highness informed me that the Queen had also nominated the young Emperor to the same position in the Scots Greys, and ordered me to telegraph to their commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel (now Sir Alfred) Welby, to cable a message of gratification on behalf of the regiment to Nicholas II, who had already telegraphed his great pleasure at being appointed to such a distinguished regiment.

Having carried out this command I attended the wedding in the Winter Palace. Mourning was abolished for the day, as Russians would have considered it a bad omen ; the Empress Mother looked sweet, but the ceremony must have been a fearful strain on Her Majesty, who had buried her devoted husband only a week previously. In the evening the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York dined at the embassy, and I had a long conversation after dinner with H.R.H., who said he would tell the Emperor how very satisfactory my tour had been.

The Russian Court being essentially a military one, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York accepted an invitation to see the famous Red Hussars of the Guard, at Tsarskoe Selo near the capital, and we all lunched with the regiment. The Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevich—Commander-in-Chief 1914-15—was the Colonel-in-Chief ; he was very fond of the distinguished corps, and always wore its uniform. Very hard drinking was the rule rather than the exception in the smartest regiments of the Imperial Guard, and the Grand Duke could hold his own against anybody in this respect. Great caution was necessary with the Red Hussars, because the officers had a trick of pouring cognac into a guest's champagne when the visitor was not looking. It was wise always to keep one eye on one's glass.

In the Russian Army the guest had to drain his glass every time that he responded to a toast. As some regi-

ments of the Imperial Guard had very many officers in excess of their proper establishment, the consequence was that if, as was likely, every officer toasted a guest in turn, and if, as might easily happen, there were some sixty officers present, the visitor would be lucky to escape with only five bottles of champagne—and brandy—under his belt, provided that he did his duty.

There was also another pitfall for the unwary : when the meal was finished, and the hosts had settled down for a wet night, tossing—without, however, a blanket—was usual. The reason was twofold : if the guest was a popular figure, tossing was a compliment ; if he were too full of good wine, the performance might make him sick, a source of amusement ; indeed, a perfectly sober individual could suffer in this way. Fortunately for me, nothing has ever been able to upset my stomach either on land or at sea, and the operation was not a very violent one, the only danger being that inebriated hosts might let you fall. The royal visitors were interested to hear of these customs, but, of course, they were treated with punctilious decorum, and all went well. Things were different when the Scots Greys came, as will be seen presently.

The Grand Duke Nicholas, a man of splendid physique and a born artist in handling masses of cavalry at drill, was not fond of the English, and was also spiteful. When the royal party was about to leave he asked me to remain behind. This extraordinary invitation was, of course, promptly declined, and I tried to think of some reason for it. Being suspicious, the idea occurred to me that the Grand Duke had said something to the Prince of Wales, which he hoped His Royal Highness would forget if I were separated from him for the time being.

As soon as we were alone in the train the Prince asked me what had happened when a former military attaché, More-Molyneux, dined with the Red Hussars. Having heard the story I replied that there had only been a little friendly argument during a hot night at mess, but everybody liked him very much.

“Tell me what happened,” said the Prince ; “the Grand Duke Nicholas mentioned the matter to-day.”



More-Molyneux had been dining with the regiment, champagne had flowed in bucketfuls, and, as the evening wore on, there was some discussion as to which was the greater Power, England or Russia. The British officer, solitary amidst his potential enemies, defended his position with vigour and skill. This had rankled in the Grand Duke's brain for more than three years, and whatever pinpricks the guest had thrust into him had been thoroughly merited.

It was likewise the custom in Germany to drain glasses, but toasts were not such a serious affair as in Russia : first of all, they were far fewer in number, for in Muscovy, after exhausting a list comprising one's own Sovereign, Royal Family, army, navy, one's regiment and country, all sorts of other items might be introduced. In Germany this was not the case and, in order to reduce the amount of liquor imbibed, one could pour there a very small quantity from the larger glass into another one, and there was no difficulty. It must, however, be added that, in Russia, if a guest were firm from the beginning, and politely declined to be turned into a kind of vat, his strange behaviour was accepted without being followed by a challenge to a duel.

There was a very pretty custom in the Russian Army : when the senior officer on parade first approached the troops he would call out : " Good health, brothers," to which they replied with one voice : " We wish you well." After a unit had marched past, if the commander was satisfied, he would cry : " Thank you, brothers," which brought forth the response : " Glad to try and please you."

The Prince of Wales made use of these expressions as if he had been accustomed to them all his life. The Duke of Edinburgh left St. Petersburg two days after the wedding ; he was, as always, very nice to meet, but looked dreadfully ill. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of York prolonged their stay until December 2nd, very well pleased with their visit in spite of the distressing circumstances which had caused it.

Meanwhile, much of my time was occupied by the compilation of reports on my journey in Central Asia, and

of conversations with the Minister of War, and M. de Staal, who had arrived from his post in London. I had never met the Russian Ambassador before, but he and the Prince of Wales wished me to discuss my travels with him. On one point my mind had always been clear, and that was to let General Vannovsky and Baron Vrevsky have copies of the despatch, recounting my adventures and opinions, which was given to Sir Frank Lascelles for transmission to the Foreign Office. When Blue Books are laid before Parliament some members think that none of the correspondence has been omitted, whereas, of course, if our Government, or the other one concerned, thinks it would be advisable to hide something—perhaps something very important—this is not printed, and the general public is none the wiser. All that need be said here is that the perusal of the unexpurgated despatch had very happy results.

After the Armistice a stick was found with which to castigate Mr. Lloyd George, on account of his geographical ignorance: he thought Teschen, the town, was a foreign general, or something like that. M. de Staal did not profess to be an encyclopædia: in the course of conversation one day the transfer of Ionov to command at Kerki was mentioned sympathetically by me. His Excellency asked me just where the place is situated, although, during his career in England, he must have read the name scores of times and, like some other people, had not troubled to look it up.

Among other things he asked me my view about Anglo-Russian relations in Asia, which was that a conterminous frontier would be the best means of avoiding friction. Everything that passed between us was, of course, reported by me to the ambassador, who transmitted it to London. I expressed a hope at the time that I had “not written myself out of my appointment,” but His Excellency said that he would, if need arose, see to that. My knuckles received nevertheless a sharp rap: Lascelles was told that Lord Kimberley was “a good deal taken aback” at my presumption in discussing such a question as Buffer States. Everybody was aware, the letter continued, that

the problem must arise at some future time, but that, until it should, it must not even be thought of, much less should it be talked about ! It is, however, difficult to control one's thoughts.

The letter to the ambassador went on to say that Kouropatkin, who had come to St. Petersburg and had met Lascelles, had been more "sensible," when asked by the latter for his opinion concerning Buffer States. This was, however, as Sir Frank knew very well, just one of those problems when "fencing" would be practised. Anything said by a high official to an ambassador is more or less official, or may be interpreted in that sense.

On the other hand, a foreigner of high position, talking to a junior British officer, can and often does say what he thinks. Kouropatkin's real view—and I got to know him very well—was the reverse of that which he mentioned to Sir Frank, and besides, as we have seen, the Russians nearly always distrusted diplomatists intensely. Some politicians of to-day, when believing that they are in "full accord" with some other Power, might bear in mind that often they only know that which the other man has told them. This does not, of course, imply that opinions may not, as is frequently the case, differ quite honestly.

My friend, the late Mr. Hugh O'Beirne, a very able diplomatist, who went down with the *Hampshire* in 1916, had been transferred from St. Petersburg to Paris, and he told me that Lord Dufferin, as a former Viceroy of India, on reading my despatch, had restrained himself only with difficulty from seizing his pen and lacerating me for my ignorance and stupidity. Sir Frank Lascelles reduced matters to their proper proportion by writing that my opinion was merely the academic utterance of an unimportant subordinate, and, indeed, it would have been giving myself ridiculous airs to have told M. de Staal, in answer to his enquiry, that the subject was one impossible to be mentioned between us. All's well that ends well, however, and my disgrace in high quarters was very temporary indeed ; it was fortunate for me to have had such a kind chief.

There had been some of the usual disturbances in Armenia in 1894, which had aroused the wrath of Mr. Gladstone. Admiral of the Fleet Sir E. Commerell had a capital letter on the subject, published in *The Times* of December 20th, which stamped him as pro-Turk. This gave great pleasure in St. Petersburg, especially to the Minister of War, who had been talking to me about the matter only ten days previously. He had a sense of humour, and said that England seemed to be in a precious hurry to espouse the cause of the Armenians, while she had steadfastly called the Russians liars when they accused the Afghans of committing outrages in Shignan.

General Vannovsky had served in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8, when he saw something of the Armenians. He described them to me as being "worse than the Jews," the sharpest criticism which a Russian could express. His detestation—and that of his wife—of the Bulgarians was equally strong: they are both "rapacious and avaricious," he declared. There will be something to say, in a later chapter, about their ruler, Ferdinand, which will show that, whatever were the bad qualities of his subjects, they were relatively trivial as compared with his own rascality.

The most interesting event in St. Petersburg, at the dawn of 1895, was the arrival, on January 30th, of a deputation from the Royal Scots Greys to pay their respects to the Emperor on his appointment as their colonel-in-chief. It was composed of Lieutenant-Colonel Welby, Major Hippisley, Captain Scobell, and the Regimental Sergeant-Major Duncan. This was the second occasion on which a foreign Sovereign had held the position—the German Emperor, William II, of the Royal Dragoons, being the first—while Duncan's visit, to represent the non-commissioned ranks, was said to be unique. The Prince of Wales had given me particular instructions about the guests, and a friend of mine, Count George Bobrinsky, aide-de-camp to the Minister of War, was attached to them. They had a wonderful, in some respects a terrific, reception, but hard heads and a certain amount of wariness triumphed over all hospitable obstacles,



while report declared that Duncan, emerging unscathed himself, put regiment after regiment under the table. Once more was the invincibility of the British Army in any sphere amply demonstrated, the only trifling set-back being when Captain Scobell was "stung" at baccarat.

The Emperor received the deputation shortly after their arrival; to show how little things upset sometimes the diplomatic mind it may be mentioned that the French Embassy were rather unhappy that the Scots Greys should have been honoured: in memory of Waterloo they wear the Napoleonic eagle on their accoutrements, and it was feared that this symbol on the Emperor's uniform might retard, if it did not prevent, the realisation of the Franco-Russian alliance, for which France was making such desperate efforts!

There was a small dinner-party at the Anichkov Palace of sixteen covers, to which the ambassador, Count Bobrinsky, and myself were also commanded, and the visit terminated with a farewell audience. It was the rule then—practically abolished during the Great War—that British subjects might not accept decorations from a foreign Chief of State. The Emperor, however, was desirous of marking the occasion by conferring them; failing this, very handsome presents would have been given. The officers were strongly in favour of decorations, so I telegraphed to Sir Reginald Gipps, the Military Secretary, and the Queen's sanction was obtained. Sergeant-Major Duncan was the recipient of a medal. Altogether the Scots Greys thoroughly enjoyed their fortnight's stay, an unusually long one, which included a visit to Moscow.

With the exception of the Imperial dinner-party a guest night at the mess of the Red Hussars was the *pièce de résistance* in more senses than one. The hospitable nature of those gallant officers has already been mentioned, and the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevich presided. Scores of Hussars, active and retired, were present, and the gallery of the big room—where the band was stationed—was filled with privileged spectators.

I had taken the precaution of getting a message from

the Prince of Wales to the Grand Duke, placing the visitors under his special protection, so that they should not be pressed to take more wine—and brandy—than they desired. I had some hopes that a message from such a quarter would have beneficial results, especially as His Imperial Highness had recently been unwell, and might be dieting himself in consequence. At any rate, just before we were going to sit down at table, the royal message was delivered and an assurance given in reply that all would be well.

The meal had not progressed far before the toasts commenced, the Grand Duke, of course, leading off; then they began to resemble machine-gun fire in the rapidity with which one followed the other. My place was a few chairs to the left of the Imperial host on the same side of our table. Colonel Welby naturally did not relish this sort of thing and, at last, after some more or less unimportant toast, he emptied only a portion of the contents of his glass. I can see the Grand Duke now as he stood there waiting; Welby smiled, and said that he did not wish to drink anything more, to which the other replied in French:

“I insist.”

Once again was the invincibility of the British Army firmly established, for Welby replied, with a pleasant smile:

“*Monseigneur, nous sommes venus ici non pour l'ivresse mais pour l'hospitalité!*” (Your Imperial Highness, we are not here to get drunk, but to receive hospitality.)

For one brief fraction of a second it seemed to me as if the Grand Duke wished to cut his guest down, as a look of amazed rage passed over his countenance while his hand flew to his side, and there was a general gasp of amazement.

One thinks quickly in moments of intense strain: a brain wave told me that to create an instantaneous diversion, in the shape of an uproar, was the only thing to be done. Immediately in front of me, on the mess table, was a huge cut-glass candelabra: every eye in the room was directed on the two men concerned, so I grasped,

unseen, the tall stem of the candelabra, pulled it over towards me until it began to totter, and then I left the rest to gravity. The crash was terrific ; indeed, I am not sure that Nicholas did not believe it to be a bomb. But the situation was saved ; every eye was now turned on the horrible débris in front of me, and the catastrophe was put down to some Red Hussar whose legs would no longer support him. I never gave the answer to the riddle : it was wiser not to do so, but good came out of evil.

This felicitous disaster, if it may be so termed, reminds me of another upset, of a different nature, which happened at Berlin eight years afterwards. My wife and I were dining with some foreign friends ; the party was of the usual kind, that is to say, a score or more of guests were present, for it was not the correct thing to have less than that number at such an entertainment. Some of us were going on to a reception at the Duchess of Ratibor's, and we were all in our best clothes. On one side of me was a big, handsome, German lady, the wife of a major in the Guards, and our acquaintance was very slight ; she was garbed in a costume of pale blue satin, cut very low on her ample bosom. As the meal progressed she criticised King Edward unfavourably ; it was very bad taste on her part, and she would have been furious if the position had been reversed, so my replies were decidedly tart.

The custom at those dinner-parties is to have appropriate wines served with each course and, at Berlin, glasses were handed round, already filled, at the proper time. With, say, ten people on each side of a table, a footman would balance a tray of glasses on his hand, and pass it over a guest's left shoulder so that the latter could take his glass. My friend and I were seated at the beginning end of our side ; a gnat was tickling my left ear, so my hand was raised to flick it off.

At that very instant, unknown to me, a footman was inserting his tray between myself and the critic ; my hand caught the under side of the big salver ; I looked round, and saw that all the glasses had commenced to slide towards the lady. Unless I pulled the tray quickly in my direction disaster to her was certain to ensue, but, if I

had done this, the contents would have fallen upon me. Once more I thought rapidly : if she had not been so insistent in her dislike of a monarch, of whom she knew nothing, I would have thrown myself into the breach. As it was, however, the glasses tilted more and more over her head—the man saw what was happening, endeavoured, unsuccessfully, to bring them back to the horizontal—and they descended in a deluge of iced hock amid a crash of glass.

The effect on the guests was as if a shell had exploded, and her nearest companions tried to repair damages as much as possible ; my napkin was forced down on to her bosom, somebody else wiped the chair and hind portion of her body, while the unknown, and, fortunately, unsuspected author of the catastrophe begged the victim to exchange chairs. This she refused, saying that nothing could make her less wet. We all resumed our places and the dinner proceeded ; her husband was sitting almost opposite, and took the affair more coolly than did anybody else, merely remarking, as he ate his huge asparagus :

“Ach ! my dear, it is fortunate that it was wine ; if it had been water you would have caught cold !”

Dinner was over at last, and the company moved into another room for coffee, beer, and tobacco. While the poor lady—I was beginning to feel a brute—was shivering in her ruined dress, the major calmly smoked a big cigar to the end before he would take her home. Truly we never know when Nemesis will overtake us. Mention of ladies reminds me that no sooner had the Prince of Wales been appointed Colonel-in-Chief of the Kiev Dragoons than he received a letter from a Madame Yousefovich, in which she begged His Royal Highness to get her son-in-law, Captain Sorokin, promoted. The date of the March promotions was near at hand, and the lady, no doubt, remembered the proverb about the early bird and the worm. Her petition was, however, sent on to me to deal with, so I explained, with many regrets, that it was quite out of the question for the Prince to interfere, more especially as there was another captain in the regiment who was senior both in age and length of service to the son-in-law.



Reverting to more serious topics the Emperor had a long conversation with me shortly after my return from Central Asia, which he had never visited. This was the first but not the last of my private interviews—some of them much more important—with that ruler. It had always seemed to me that the proper course to pursue on such occasions was to say frankly what was in my mind ; this method was certainly reciprocated so far as my experience goes : when William II, on October 23rd, 1901, threatened intervention in the Boer War, I replied that, while he and his Allies might succeed in pulling us down, this would not make England stop the struggle, and that we would do our utmost to drag Germany down with us. The details of this lengthy conference are beyond the scope of this work, but His Majesty did not afterwards change his pleasant demeanour towards me in consequence of my remarks.

Nicholas II and the German Emperor were, in temperament, as far apart as the Poles : the former was gentle, the latter masterful, but each was anxious to hear the real views of others. The Russian monarch said he would very much like to read the account of my journey, as “ it will be your own opinion formed before you knew we should see it.” He told me afterwards that he liked having an outsider’s opinion on men and matters.

The Foreign Office was very glad to receive my report on the situation in Central Asia, and was, on the whole, satisfied with the picture which I had drawn. All fear, however, was not yet banished ; I had mentioned that, without painting the Russians as all white, and the Afghans as all black, it was quite possible, perhaps probable, that some little local trouble—such as that of August 1894—might again recur, pending the final delimitation of boundaries. Sir Thomas Sanderson wrote to me that this prospect was “ disturbing,” and the difficulty was to get high authorities at a distance to see things in their true perspective ; Sir Frank Lascelles had grasped the situation immediately, but London, with the Government of India behind it, was more difficult. Yet the indubitable fact was that Russian communications by sea and land were quite

unsuited for any large operation, while the total number of troops in Turkestan—armed, indeed, with that bogey, the new rifle—was relatively insignificant.

Although we are apt to criticise our own officials, their shortcomings are trifling indeed when compared with those to be found abroad. Russian officials thought they could sit on the safety valve for ever without being blown sky-high, and kept the Emperor in the dark. But for the stupidity of German officialdom the United States might have kept out of the Great War. For unsurpassably ridiculous limitations of human liberty republics are, indeed, pre-eminent, more especially, perhaps, in God's own country, but a monarchy—Italy, for instance—may run them close. Not long before 1914 British delegates to a Trade Union Congress in Paris reported that the trampling by the authorities on the freedom of citizens was a “disgrace to, and an anomaly in, a republican nation.” All Berlin believed, when the Boer War came to an end, that we had purchased peace by promising our foe three millions sterling, and, having thereby attained our object, refused to part with the cash. The author wrote this to the late Field-Marshal Lord Nicholson at the time.

A little incident may close this chapter. A member of the Austrian Embassy at St. Petersburg, Prince Schönburg, invited me to a *tête-à-tête* dinner soon after my return from Central Asia, being anxious to get some information at first-hand—the Austrians, as we have seen, were always on the prowl—and he was evidently somewhat disturbed at the possibility of England and Russia becoming better friends. He cross-examined me after dinner at some length and, at intervals, asked me to excuse him for a few minutes. It was obvious that he wanted to put in writing the appalling mass of news and statistics which his guest was literally pouring into his ears, but these constant interruptions wasted a fair amount of time, besides being rather wearisome. I told him, at last, that he had much better jot down his notes on the spot, and then I could correct any errors he might make. He was quite shocked: never had such an idea entered his head; my confidences—they were not confidences at all—

were sacred. My idea was that it would be salutary for Austria to hear the truth. He did not leave me again, nor would he produce his pencil.

He was reckoned to be an able diplomatist, and belonged to one of the few families who had the right of attending the Viennese Court. We were talking, one day, about the lamentable results of in-breeding in such families. He quite agreed, but said that he would sooner marry into one of them, with the probable consequences, than ally himself with a lady whose quarterings were not beyond dispute.

## CHAPTER IX

THE inauguration of a new reign, or of a new government, stimulates hope, and the accession of Nicholas II was no exception to the rule. Expectancy had been roused to a high pitch, and far-reaching reforms were confidently anticipated. A great event occurred just ten weeks after he ascended the throne: this was the reception by His Majesty of the deputations of the nobility from all parts of Russia. Some foreign newspapers prophesied the introduction of a Constitution and the abolition of autocracy.

The disappointment was profound when the Emperor, so far from announcing some measure of governmental reform, ruthlessly dispelled the "thoughtless" hopes which had arisen. His Majesty's speech was, of course, canvassed in the capital to such an extent that it was smothered beneath a mass of wild talk. A well-known member of St. Petersburg society told me that the Imperial pronouncement had not, however, caused acute depression there: people in high positions might become worse off under any new system, while their subordinates would not welcome the enlargement of the field of selection. This seemed to fit the situation, but in the provinces, my informant said, feeling was very sore indeed.

Things began therefore to go wrong within three months of the death of Alexander III, and the eternal squabbling between the *entourage* of the Empress Mother and that of her son and daughter-in-law boded ill for the future; the intrigues were endless. In a monarchy not every man attached to a Court is a courtier, but some are: solemn, mysterious individuals, discreet to their fingertips, and usually able to see only one side of a question.

Meanwhile, a big figure had arisen in the person of M. Witte, the Minister of Finance. He was a very ambitious



man, who had started life in a humble sphere, but there were many openings for men of his stamp in Russia. His financial abilities had brought him to the front, and it had been thought that he would finish his career by dry-nursing a succession of chiefs, probably in the Ministry of Finance. As aspirants to that Department sounded his praises loudly Alexander III, with a sense of humour, had decided to make him the head of it.

He was known to favour reforms, and soon sanctioned the zone system on Russian railways, whereby the farther one travels the less is the proportionate cost. This was an enormous boon in view of the immense distances—Moscow and Irkutsk, each a long distance from the sea, are four thousand miles apart—and there was a huge increase of traffic. Every available carriage had to be put into service and, one day, the floor fell out of my first-class compartment. Unable to stop the train, we had to be cautious until a station was reached, while hoping that the remainder of the coach would not imitate the floor.

It was stated freely that the zone system was adopted so that reformers might have greater facilities for communicating personally with each other; possibly there was a grain of truth in this, but encouragement of traffic was the chief cause. Nicholas II disliked Witte personally, but recognised his ability. The Minister stabilised the rouble by introducing a gold coinage, but his original scheme had to be modified: for instance, a gold coin, representing five roubles in the precious metal, was worth seven and a half in paper currency, but the small shopkeepers and peasants, who had never before seen gold, did not understand this, and demurred if a purchaser, tendering a piece of five roubles for one paper rouble's worth of goods, wanted six and a half roubles change in currency. The gold was then reduced in quantity so as to be equivalent to the nominal value of paper. The late Lord Rothschild classed Witte to me once as being not much of a financier.

Witte was scarcely known in St. Petersburg society for a long time, in fact not at all; nor did he seem inclined to curry favour with the great world by giving market tips, and his wife was not received. Ambassadors were told

by the Mistress of the Robes—as we may term her—not to call upon her. As time passed, however, the pair had much of St. Petersburg at their feet for services rendered, the power of the purse making itself felt in Russia as here, but on a smaller scale.

The early accession of Nicholas II had been entirely unexpected, and it was not his fault that he had had no special training before entering upon his unparalleled inheritance. No kinder-hearted people than His Majesty, the reigning Empress and the Empress Mother ever lived, but the difficulties which the autocrat had to encounter were bound, at some undefinable date, to overwhelm Russia. It will be seen later, however, that the Emperor's native shrewdness gave him a much better insight than that of his Ministers into the character of his people.

Alexandra Feodorovna soon began to lose the affection or admiration—call it what one will—which her beauty, and marriage under such distressing circumstances, had at first evoked. There could be, of course, no entertainments, in which she could take part, until after the lengthy period of Court mourning. There were, however, numbers of Russians who expected to meet Her Majesty more or less frequently, and these were greatly offended when it was known that her tastes were decidedly domestic; in addition to this they resented some changes in Court etiquette; they were trivial in themselves, but it was a dangerous step to take, so early in the reign at any rate.

The general impression in St. Petersburg, especially in military circles, in 1895, was that something was going to happen concerning the results of the recent Chino-Japanese War, whereby Japan had wrested great tracts of territory from her foe. The Russian desire for an open port in the Far East was the cause of this sentiment, and, besides, Russia did not want a strong Oriental Power close to her own frontier, while the powerful speculative element saw a chance of getting rich quickly in Corea. The result was, as everybody knows, that Japan had to surrender her spoils, while injury was added to insult, three years afterwards, by Russia practically annexing the richest portion of them, namely, Manchuria.

The German Emperor, William II, had been quiescent for some time past when, in March 1895, he suddenly administered a terrific slap to his ambassador at St. Petersburg, General von Werder; he recalled him by telegram, saying that he intended, in future, to have a professional diplomatist there. Some years previously Werder had been attached directly to Alexander III, with whom he lunched every Sunday, and returned as ambassador in 1892. Rumour was, of course, rife as to the real cause of the trouble, and some of us wondered whether the German ruler thought that England and Russia were becoming too friendly. Poor Werder was naturally greatly upset at his very unceremonious treatment. It was not the only time that he had been used badly: when he was Governor of Berlin, a brother general called upon him and enquired whether he might view the house, to which Werder readily assented. On enquiring the reason for the request the other replied that he had been appointed governor of the capital!

Towards the end of the winter the great event was the Horse Show—*Concours Hippique*—and, in 1895, a friend of mine, who after the Revolution of 1917 very nearly became King of Finland, Baron Mannerheim by name, had an Irish mare entered. He was then a subaltern in the *Chevaliers Gardes*, corresponding to our 1st Life Guards. He was a tall, heavy man, who did not compete personally, and had had some difficulty in finding an officer to ride the animal, which was a hard-pulling one.

The show went on for several Sundays in succession, and Trick took charge of her rider—the locality was a huge, covered, riding school—and almost got him through the big double doors leading into the arena. Russians did not, as a rule, care much for riding; annual obligatory steeplechases were, indeed, the rule in cavalry regiments, but the obstacles were dangerously small. Once, after having dined very well, a cavalry youngster confided that “the horse is the worst enemy of man.” On the other hand Prince Golitsin rode in our Grand National, and proved that he was an artist in the saddle.

Mannerheim asked me to ride his mare after her initial

display, and I was very glad to accept, as I had had some experience in cross-country racing. The *manège* was about a hundred and forty yards in length and of ample width, the whole of St. Petersburg society being seated in tiers round the arena. I had discovered, before the eventful day, that Trick was a little excitable, and hoped for the best.

We negotiated the first round—there were three of them—successfully, when it became evident to me, although not to the spectators, that the generally approved custom of a slow canter would not do. We therefore quickened the pace to a gallop, and, as a matter of fact, it would then have been impossible to have stopped the animal, so I pretended that a racing gallop was what I wanted. The stratagem succeeded to perfection: Trick jumped admirably, and, after clearing the last obstacle, a sudden pull took her unawares, and I was able to stop her amid tumultuous applause! The judges, however, only awarded us the second prize, because the pace had been too fast. In memory of the event Mannerheim presented me with a beautiful silver christening bowl, of the type used in the Orthodox Church; some people thought this a not very appropriate gift, as I was then a bachelor.

There are two sequels to this story: on the following Sunday there was to be another event for which Trick was entered, and I was to ride her again. In the meantime, however, Mannerheim came to me in a great state of mind to say that his colonel, General Nicolaev, had forbidden him to put a foreigner up. The commanding officer had, I think, much the same opinion of horses as had the young gentleman already mentioned. My friend, however, had devised a scheme for outwitting Nicolaev: this was that I should purchase Trick, ride her, and then resell her to the original owner, but the idea did not appeal to me. In a subsequent year a Russian officer steered her triumphantly to victory, and, as time passed, Russians came and won, more than once, the Gold Cup at Olympia, presented by His Majesty the King.

The other incident was of a different nature. Lunching with a friend at a restaurant, shortly after Trick had run



away with me, a friend of my companion came and joined us. He began to talk about the Horse Show, and remarked : " But there was some Englishman there, etc., etc.," and I was then introduced. My new acquaintance was a Baron Schilling, from the Baltic Provinces, and he asked me to ride some of his horses at Reval in 1896, sixteen months later ; he had, he said, nothing good enough at the time for such an artist as I evidently was !

He spoke as if he had a racing stable of some size—really trotting races were more in favour in Russia than our system—and I consented. When the date drew near, however, I was staying with the Belosselskys, and my host endeavoured to dissuade me from flying off to Reval. He said Schilling had nothing worth riding, and that I had much better remain where I was. It seemed, however, unfair to disappoint my man, so to Reval I journeyed, and very nearly took the next train back, as Schilling's horses had gone wrong, a fact of which he had not informed me. A friend of his, however, had an animal good enough to win the principal event of the second day, provided it could be prevented from running out in the straight ; nobody among the local talent had hitherto been able to overcome this idiosyncrasy, but it was assumed to be easy for me to manage it.

Feeling, of course, convinced that my hands and wonderful skill would be equal to the occasion the matter was arranged. The chief danger in Russian steeplechases was that the obstacles were so ridiculously small that an animal might easily, if at all excited, gallop into instead of over them, and bring about disaster : the average height of a fence or hurdle was about fourteen inches, a somewhat alarming prospect.

On the second day there were several terrific downpours of rain, and my bridle reins became like soft soap, which added to my difficulties. Starting below the distance post we had to go once round and then finish, a distance of about a mile and a quarter with about eighteen of the hazardous traps. The field was small—half a dozen runners—due, no doubt, to the opposition being frightened of my prowess ; my idea was simple enough, namely, to keep

somebody else on my right hand, as the course was left-handed and my mount always went off to the right ; as regards speed he was known to have the legs of all the others.

My scheme came off splendidly at first ; just after the start my horse's inclination to make for the paddock was easily frustrated, as the one on his right refused to be carried out, and I began to see victory in my grasp, for the pace was very slow, which suited us. About two furlongs from home, however, the other riders seemed so determined to leave me in the lead that the speed was reduced almost to a crawl. My animal was going so nicely that I determined to take him to the front and win. Leaving the others all went well until within thirty or forty yards of the winning post, alongside of which was the entrance to the paddock. I was not taken unawares, but the determination of the horse overcame my guiding powers ; feeling, perhaps, annoyed with Baron Schilling for having been the means of once again bringing him on to a racecourse, he headed straight for the judge's box.

Therein was seated the judge with the Baron standing on his right, and, on the ledge in front of them, stood a half-empty magnum of Moët and Chandon's champagne with a couple of tumblers. Neither of the occupants sensed at first what was going to happen ; the horse had, hitherto, always made for the gate into the paddock, but I shall never forget their look of horrified amazement as they realised that Nemesis was after the Baron !

They remained motionless, transfixed with justifiable terror, awaiting the result. My eagle eye had noticed in the brief space of time that the roof of the box projected about a foot, and was just on a level with my neck. I could, of course, have jumped off, but that seemed too cowardly before foreigners : I had come a long way to show people how to ride ! So I ducked my head ; the crash was terrific ; the box was solid on its foundations, but the ledge, on which stood the champagne, was smashed to smithereens, the judge upset off his chair, and the Baron, a big, solid man, rammed into the back wall. Then, at last, we stopped, the immovable mass being too much for our momentum, and

disentangled ourselves from the débris, a matter of some difficulty. The poor horse was so badly injured that it had to be destroyed.

Nemesis also overtook the remainder of the field, although not in a physical sense : the judge had other things to think about, when he realised the coming onslaught, than placing the first three, so the race was declared void and was not run over again. The other jockeys, when declining to aid me in my scheme, had never anticipated such a tragic finale. So nobody won, and, having established this record at Reval, I returned as quickly as possible to St. Petersburg, where Prince Belosselsky, instead of condoling with my misfortunes, merely said : “ I told you that you would be a fool to go, and so you were ! ”

While the hope of political reform had been shattered by the young Emperor in January 1895, at Easter of that year there was another bad omen, very disturbing for superstitious people like the Russians : Easter is *the* great festival of the Orthodox Church ; millions of people, who never had meat to eat at any other time of the year, ate it at Easter, and rejoicing was general all over the land. During the celebrations at the Winter Palace the electric light went out. The cause is still a mystery to me ; more than one hypothesis would fit the case, but, whatever it was, the evil influence of the reigning Empress was already suspected in it. To us this seems incredible, but matters grew worse as time went on, as remains to be told. From the beginning the unfortunate lady could seldom, if ever, do anything right. Of a stronger or—shall we say—of a more obstinate character than Nicholas II, she was, as we shall see, in a desperate position even before the crash came in 1917.

In the early nineties there had been a great famine in Russia for which England subscribed large sums, while voluntary and involuntary collections were made among the Russians. General Annenkov, the constructor of the Transcaspian railway, was one of the principal officials who collected and distributed relief. All things, however, come to an end, and so did the famine, so that the funds were ordered to be closed in 1893. Two years afterwards

an enquiry was held in consequence, it was stated, of allegations that the general had continued to collect, and that an item, totalling £300,000, had vanished, but the mystery was never cleared up so far as I know.

Affairs in Central Asia still occupied a good deal of time. We had always been harrying the Russians about their high-handed proceedings in that region, and now, in the summer of 1895, they were very sore with us over the Chitral question, so that we had become objects of great suspicion. They could not understand our plea that everything we did was actuated by the most unselfish motives. The health of my friend, General Vannovsky, had become more and more indifferent, and Kouropatkin was appointed to succeed him. This caused great resentment in St. Petersburg society, as neither he nor his wife were of it; so far as I could venture to judge it was the best selection that could have been made. The system of military patronage in Russia was rotten: a Guards captain on promotion became a full colonel, and would then be given command of a line regiment, and so on, thus depriving officers, who were not Guardsmen, of many chances of promotion.

This sort of thing was the practice during the Russo-Japanese War, and was one of the chief causes of the Russian disasters. A subaltern in the *Gardes à Cheval* (2nd Life Guards) became a Petersburg Cossack—so named in derision by real Cossacks—in 1904, and took command of a squadron in Manchuria. He told me that the campaign soon began to pall upon him, so he malingered in order to return home, not before he had made a large sum out of the money which he had received for the upkeep of his squadron! He saw nothing odd in telling me, a foreign officer, this.

A joint Anglo-Russian Commission had at last been appointed to demarcate boundaries in the Pamir region, and my predecessor, Gerard, now a general officer, was selected by the Government of India as its chief representative. Difficulties arose at the outset. Prince Lobanov had become Minister for Foreign Affairs, and his instructions to my friend, General Povalo-Shveikovsky, who was



the Russian Commissioner, were that the Amir's representative must also have the same status as the other two. This was entirely opposed to Gerard's instructions, by which the Afghan was to be merely an observer, who had nothing whatever to do with the settlement. It was obvious that to give the Afghan the same powers as those of Gerard and his Russian colleague would be bound to lead to endless delays, if not to wreck any chance of a settlement. A *modus vivendi*, subject to the approval of the two Governments, was, however, arrived at, and the work was begun and finished satisfactorily.

As an instance of the groundless fears of the Government of India, respecting an invasion of India, it may be mentioned that Gerard's Commission consisted of about ninety persons: to land it at its meeting-place in the Pamir region, with supplies for three months and light field service tents, required eight hundred and thirty-five baggage animals, together with more than two hundred drivers and coolies. Our small force at Gilgit had to be fed entirely from India, about sixteen thousand pony-loads of food being required annually, while the cost of each load was not less than one pound sterling. This corroborated my view that the real danger as regards India would come from within and not from without; subsequent events seem to have endorsed this opinion.

Gerard wrote a very interesting letter to Sir Frank Lascelles about the work of his Commission, and another one to the Government of India. In the latter he mentioned, among other things, that Sir Robert Morier had been the only British ambassador to Russia who had shown real ability. This was sufficiently surprising, considering their former relations, but Gerard went on to say that his successor, Lascelles, had no position at St. Petersburg. This second letter was printed and circulated, so that the ambassador was able to learn exactly what the Commissioner thought of him! The fact was that Gerard had always felt that he himself was the man for the post, and he thought, perhaps, that his successful demarcation labours would hoist him into the appointment.

Lascelles was greatly entertained by the incident ; he could well afford to be.

General Moncrieff and a brother officer, Kent, were travelling in the Crimea in 1895, and were much interested in some Russian naval manœuvres. This was not at all appreciated ; perhaps the Russians were aware of the fact that their fleet in those waters was not really very efficient, except as regards the Scottish engineers, but the visitors would take no hints, so complaint was made to Prince Lobanov, who requested that they should quit the scene of action, as, otherwise, they would probably be jailed. The owner of a yacht also was most indignant at the impertinence of the Russians in interfering with his freedom of movement.

Matters in Asia being now on a satisfactory footing, the Russians took a hand in the everlasting Macedonian question in a kind of " hidden hand " manner. Nothing whatever was likely to come of it, but some people in London at once became anxious ; it was curious how little was wanted to startle us. Ten years later, when I was with Lord Rosebery in Hyde Park, discussing racing and breeding, Count Mensdorff, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in London, came up and enquired whether his lordship was going to speak in the House of Lords on that afternoon, as an important debate on Macedonia was announced to take place. Lord Rosebery replied that he did not even propose to attend, whereupon Mensdorff remarked that the question was a very serious one indeed, and that the Government was to lay a paper on the table.

" Oh," said Lord Rosebery, " that means nothing at all. The Foreign Office always keeps a supply of answers to all possible enquiries, and just ladles them out as occasion demands."

The look of astonishment on Mensdorff's face was ludicrous, and, as he walked off, my companion said : " Bother the fellow, he has broken the thread of my thoughts."

All minor matters were, however, blown into thin air by a horrid shock. There was a dinner-party at the embassy, on August 25th, to meet Mr. H. McCalmont,

the racing magnate, and some of his friends, who had arrived in their yacht. After the guests had departed the ambassador said he wanted to speak to me : it appeared that, before dinner, he had received a secret cablegram from Lord Salisbury, asking him to succeed Sir Edward Malet at Berlin ; Sir Frank said the request was couched in terms which he could scarcely refuse, but was kind enough to want my opinion. He had been just thirteen months in St. Petersburg, and no sensible person could have served under His Excellency, even for a few weeks, without feeling the utmost confidence in, and the most sincere affection for, him. This was not a passing wave of sentiment ; I served under him at Berlin, during the Boer War, and my opinion has never been modified.

I told Sir Frank my view that, for some years to come, and until affairs in Europe should take a different course, England and Russia would not be on really good terms. There were various obvious reasons for this belief, the principal ones being Asiatic annoyances, and especially the growing strength of the Franco-Russian *Entente*. From a professional, diplomatic point of view, therefore, it seemed to me that a transfer to Berlin would be advantageous to him. On the other hand, I hated the thought of being separated from such a perfect chief. Soon after his arrival in St. Petersburg there had been a chance of Anglo-Russian relations becoming more happy, but mutual mistrust had revived. Russia, drawing ever closer towards France, felt she was in the stronger position. Other factors had also to be considered : Lascelles was a relatively poor man at the time, his expenses of installation—for which an inadequate sum was allotted to him—had been very heavy, Berlin was not a cheap capital, and the salary was smaller than at St. Petersburg.

His son and private secretary, Gerald Lascelles, was present during our conversation, and, just before taking my leave, I suggested that the ambassador should telegraph to Lord Salisbury, asking for permission to go to London in order to discuss the matter with his lordship. Gerald Lascelles attacked me bitterly as we went downstairs ; he was very happy where he was, and said : “ Well, you

have settled it now. It is ruin to us having to make this change, and to succeed Malet, who has £10,000 a year ; it is an insult to recall an ambassador from here to Berlin."

I explained that, in an affair of such importance, Sir Frank was likely to decide for himself, and that, in any case, he was going to see Lord Salisbury if possible. He had, however, little hope of escaping the transfer. The reply from the Prime Minister was that he would be very glad to see Lascelles if he started at once ; he was, apparently, going abroad immediately, but he also hoped that the ambassador would meanwhile telegraph his acceptance of Berlin. This, of course, settled it, and there was no longer any object in undertaking the journey. The reason for the haste was said to be that William II had an idea of his own respecting Malet's successor, namely, that he would like a soldier, in the person of Sir Redvers Buller, as British representative. This seemed somewhat suspicious, as the German Emperor had only recently recalled his own ambassador from St. Petersburg because he was merely a simple, blunt soldier, unfitted to cope with perfidious diplomatists.

His Majesty may, however, have had some other reason if he wished to have a military ambassador ; he was not, perhaps, aiming at the downfall of the British Empire. Details would be out of place in this volume, but, in later years, the writer often discussed with him the weak peace strength of the English Army, and the absence of organisation for expanding it rapidly in the event of a European war ; some of his proposals were very sound in this respect, and were, of course, transmitted to London. In other words, William II was undoubtedly aiming then to increase and not to diminish our military power.

The news of Sir Frank Lascelles' transfer to Berlin was, of course, to be kept a secret until the German Emperor's consent should be obtained ; the approval of Nicholas II regarding his successor was another factor. In the meantime there was a dinner-party at the embassy, the principal guest being an American lady, Lady Anglesey, the third wife of the marquis of that day. To her remark that " You are now thoroughly well settled in Russia," the



ambassador replied that nothing is certain in this world, which drew forth the retort :

“ Oh, I should have known if there was any chance of you being moved. Paris is the place for you later on.”

It is often as rash to prophesy about diplomatic matters as it is to try and back winners on the turf. When this forecast was made the Emperor Nicholas had already been informed that Sir Frank was to leave very soon for Berlin, and His Majesty had been asked whether he had any objection to his successor being a member of the Church of Rome. He had none. Through my Secret Service Department I was aware that Gerard nourished a hope that he would eventually represent Queen Victoria at the Russian Court, but nothing seemed to be more unlikely. This being the case, it was not difficult to guess the name of the new nominee, namely, Sir Nicholas O’Conor, the British Minister at Peking.

The surmise proved to be correct. It had the effect of a cold douche on Prince Lobanov, who, in discussing the possible Catholics, had remarked : “ *Pourvu seulement que ce ne soit pas O’Conor !* ” He considered him impossible. This was in consequence of his reputed violent outbursts of temper when crossed. The reason for the Foreign Minister’s tremors was that the question of granting foreign loans to China had been greatly exercising the diplomatic world. She wanted gold and, being at least as astute as the Westerners, was playing one off against the others, so that a scramble, as to who should have the privilege of parting with the cash, seemed quite likely, while England and Russia were the principal protagonists. The scheming about Chinese loans was on a gigantic scale ; the terms were to be so generous that China must surely see how disinterested everybody was !

St. Petersburg was much excited when the name of the new ambassador was announced, and the following story was promptly circulated, and, so to say, corroborated on oath. Not long previously the French Minister at Peking, confederate, of course, of his Russian colleague, was waiting to see the Chinese Foreign Secretary, when he could not help overhearing O’Conor scolding the Mandarin

in vigorous terms, and telling him that he must not, on any account, sign the treaty for a Russo-Chinese loan. The reply was that the Emperor's commands must be obeyed, and the Mandarin, being naturally somewhat ruffled, opened the door of the room in order to terminate the interview. Thereupon O'Connor, thinking that his prey was about to escape him, gripped him by his silk garment, a large piece coming off in his hand. Lobanov's clothes, however, would be of stronger texture. O'Connor, it may be mentioned, remained only two years at St. Petersburg, and was transferred subsequently to Constantinople, but England's wish was gratified, as we succeeded in lending China the sum of £32,000,000 sterling.

Sir Frank Lascelles and his family left in order to be settled at Berlin before Christmas; it was thought that, unless he took up his new appointment quickly, the German Emperor might propose some other arrangement. O'Connor would not arrive for several months, and the delay gave Goschen—afterwards ambassador at Berlin in 1914—a good innings as *chargé d'affaires*: it was always most pleasant to work with him.

Great things had been expected in the way of improvements in our military house when Lord Salisbury appointed Lord Wolseley to be Commander-in-Chief for five years. I had lost a good friend in the Duke of Cambridge, and did not really know his successor for some time to come, but he was, undoubtedly, the man for the post. As was to be foreseen, however, the predictions of the Press were falsified, because Wolseley's hands were always fettered. We were talking one day about an officer, who had shown that he ought not to have been selected for the command of his battalion, and the Commander-in-Chief remarked that he had often to act, of course, on the reports made by others, who were not themselves good judges; in addition to this, he said, some of his own nominations were overruled, from time to time, by the Secretary of State. To have resigned office would have served no good purpose, because the Government would have told Parliament that they were, and must be, the best judges. This was actually the case towards the end of the Boer War,

when Lord Wolseley was treated in an astoundingly shabby, mean manner.

The year 1895 was not to close without a sensation of transcendent dimensions, namely, the German Emperor's famous telegram to President Krüger, in which William II offered his assistance in connection with the Jameson Raid. The first I heard of it was at breakfast time, through the Russian newspapers, before going to the embassy, and the meal was only just finished, about nine o'clock, when my friend, Lauenstein, the German military attaché, was announced.

My conjecture that his visit was due to the telegram was correct. He asked me at once whether I had seen the papers and, after the reply that I had, he enquired what my opinion about the message was. I told him that his master's action would certainly raise a storm all over England, to say the very least. Lauenstein then rose from his chair, and, striding up and down the room, with his hand clapped to his forehead, exclaimed: "The Kaiser must be mad, mad, mad!"

So it seemed; the angry roar of the British lion showed that noble beast to be in a very dangerous mood. My friend, sure that his confidence would be respected, was greatly distressed by the impulsive act, but he did not hold the German Emperor's councillors guiltless in the matter, although, at the time, he knew no more than I did. Nine years afterwards, during the Russo-Japanese War, Lauenstein was discussing Anglo-German relations with me, and I told him how, in October 1901, his Sovereign had threatened intervention in South Africa, saying England had become degenerate, and German merchants were becoming very impatient; "People," he remarked, "cannot be held back for ever."

Lauenstein thereupon replied that he was well aware of the German Emperor's mistaken belief that England was no longer a Great Power, and that he had implored him to see matters in their true light. But William II, he declared, had been led astray by the inspirations of fanatics (*Kolonial-Schwärmer*) greedy of colonial expansion. Nevertheless, it cannot be alleged that His Majesty was

temperamentally anti-British, although, as a good German, he was naturally ready to reap if the opportunity should present itself. On the same day that he uttered the threat of intervention he deplored what he considered the lack of patriotism in England, and said she was badly in need of "a MAN to rouse her. But who is to do it? You want a Spurgeon."

Ignorance about foreign countries is not therefore confined to our own compatriots. Amazed and uneasy at the storm which the Krüger telegram had raised, the German Emperor sent General von Arnim to this country to explain that a totally wrong construction had been placed upon the Imperial message, but von Arnim told me all about his mission afterwards, and admitted that it had no useful result.

We are often woefully misunderstood: before the Boer War a distinguished German professor of history spent some time in England. On his return home he was asked for his impressions, and summed up his visit in two words: "*Echte Barbarei*" (Pure barbarism). An explanation of such a sweeping criticism being requested, the learned man—instructor of German youth—said there was no order of any kind; one could go to an hotel, for instance, and take a room without being required to produce any papers, whereas, in Germany, nobody could be a respectable citizen unless he carried his passport on him day and night.

St. Petersburg was naturally delighted at the storm, which enveloped England and Germany; hopes were entertained in many quarters that our fur would be badly pulled, and the political atmosphere, at the end of 1895, seemed to be somewhat sulphurous.



## CHAPTER X

THE sky cleared, nevertheless, to the disappointment of some. The Austrian Councillor of Embassy—the Marquis de Pallavicini—asked me, when the clouds were still heavy, how the Transvaal question would be settled. On assuring him that all would end well he remarked : “ But you have so many against you all over the world.” In addition to the Krüger telegram there had also been President Cleveland’s ultimatum to us concerning Venezuela, but foreigners, especially foreign diplomatists, were apt to attach more importance to such things than we did. I explained this to the Marquis, adding that, if the worst should happen, Providence was sure to watch over us, as it invariably did !

Other countries, however, likewise had their troubles : the Italian Ambassador, Marquis Maffei, who had only recently arrived in St. Petersburg, wanted to know my views concerning Russia’s intentions about Abyssinia. They were the same as those communicated to His Excellency’s predecessor, namely, that she would not go beyond intrigue ; she had too many problems elsewhere to occupy her attention. The Russians had sent a quite unscrupulous semi-official agent to Menelek in the person of a junior army officer, named Leontiev ; he gave out that he was merely taking medical stores to the Abyssinians, but nobody believed him. He even had the grotesque impudence to propose to the Italian Ambassador that he, Leontiev, should arrange peace between Italy and Abyssinia.

Menelek also sent a Mission to the Russian capital in the summer of 1895, and Bulgaria did the same thing simultaneously. This gave the Muscovite authorities an opportunity of applying differential treatment, and

showing which of the two Missions they preferred. The Abyssinians were put up at the Imperial expense in the best hotel in the city, while the Bulgarians had to go to a much cheaper one and pay their own bills. Russia had previously withdrawn her representative from Sofia, and Prince Lobanov, the Foreign Minister, had always thought this was a mistake, as it was a step difficult to retrace if Prince Ferdinand did not embrace the Orthodox Faith. He was a Catholic. No doubt he was prepared to join or to abandon any religion if, by so doing, he could further his own interests, but, at the time, he was subject to Home Rule in the form of his female Catholic relatives.

After I had given the Marquis Maffei my opinion about Russia in Abyssinia, he told me that his Government was about to despatch some twenty-five fresh battalions, and crush Menelek, but the terrible disaster of Adowa resulted, which shattered the colonial dream of Crispi, the Premier, and reduced the Italian Protectorate to an Erythrean colony. A Russian, General Kozlov—he was blown up, being mistaken for the Minister of the Interior—spoke to me at a party about the Italian catastrophe; he had a voice like a bull, and bellowed: "What else could those wretched little Italians expect?" Just then I saw the Italian Ambassador in the crowd where he must have heard every word that my companion had said. His Excellency did the most tactful thing possible: he took no notice and not a muscle of his face moved. Perhaps he thought that Russia would, one day, also suffer a calamity.

Our new ambassador, Sir Nicholas O'Connor, arrived in the early part of April 1896, and had a very busy time ahead of him, as the Coronation—the last, I think, that will ever take place in Russia—was fixed for May 26th (new style). The festivities and ceremonials in connection therewith were to commence about a week before that date, and continue for a fortnight after the great event itself.

The ambassador asked me, almost immediately after his advent, whether the Russians had been opposed to his appointment, so I told His Excellency that Prince

Lobanov had considered he would be "impossible." "But then," I added, "Lobanov is a fine, natural liar of mediocre capacity." O'Connor was quite pleased that he should be known beforehand as a fighter. He was destined to have plenty of scope in the near future.

Sir Nicholas was the third ambassador under whom I served in the space of three years; Morier and Lascelles differed in temperament, and O'Connor was quite unlike either of them, nor had he had, as in their case, the advantage of so much experience in European diplomacy. It always seemed to me that he was not sure of himself in his new surroundings, and that he was irritable and impulsive in consequence.

Just at the time of his arrival, observation and conversation with well-informed Russians and Germans—one can learn a good deal by getting people to talk, and by comparing the various statements as well as the different temperaments of one's companions—convinced me that Russia intended soon to lay hands upon Port Arthur. The inevitable corollary was that she would come to some agreement with China to ensure unfettered communication with that harbour. Thereupon I informed the ambassador, but he scouted the idea, as he waved his hand and exclaimed: "Nonsense!"

His old antagonist, Li Hung Chang, had come as special envoy from the Celestial Empire for the Coronation, and O'Connor wondered what his plans were regarding business, which he probably intended to combine with pleasure. Sir Nicholas therefore told me to hang about the Hôtel de l'Europe, where Li was housed, and find out what he was doing. On pointing out that, being well known myself, it would scarcely do for me to undertake this work, which was not in my line of business, the ambassador said he thought useful information might be extracted from the hall porter of the caravanseraï if I set to work properly. Eventually the matter dropped, and, after all, the hall porter was not likely to share Li's inmost thoughts.

It has been mentioned before that espionage is not such a simple matter as some are inclined to think. When, in 1899, war with the Boers seemed to us in the Intelligence

Division of the War Office to be certain, a batch of officers was sent out, with the utmost secrecy, to spy out the land. Passages were taken for them in the mail steamer from Southampton under assumed names, and only those in the particular section concerned knew anything of the scheme.

About ten days after they sailed I received a letter, posted at Madeira, from a lady whom I had known for years, Princess Catherine Radziwill. She wrote: "Such a joke; we discovered your disguised War Office emissaries before we had passed the Isle of Wight, and everybody, British and Boers, are immensely amused." It appeared that Cecil Rhodes was also a passenger in the same vessel, and his astute eye had at once unmasked them.

Towards the end of April the Emperor and Empress came to town from Tsarskoe Selo for a review of the troops. The Persian Minister, who was also aide-de-camp to the Shah, rather fancied himself, and asked to be permitted to attend it. The request was, of course, granted, but the Minister said he would make his own arrangements about a horse instead of riding one from the Imperial stables.

He begged the loan of a very quiet nag from a friend of mine, Prince Barclay de Tolly, a Hussar officer; the animal was duly caparisoned with very showy Oriental trappings, and the rider was hoisted by his *chasseur* into the saddle. I met my friend at dinner on the same evening, and he enquired whether the Persian had got on all right at the parade. I replied: "Indeed, no, he got off all wrong, for he was flung violently to the ground, and sustained a huge bruise on his forehead." The fact was that everything was going well until, to save time, the Emperor put his horse into a trot, followed, of course, by the suite. The Shah's staff officer had not reckoned with this contingency; after a couple of hundred yards or so of the unwonted exercise his breath failed him, and he fell like a sack in a most undignified manner. The horse—a most peaceful friend of man from the cavalry riding school—lowered its head and gazed pensively at the rider, wondering, perhaps, whether this was some new trick of horsemanship.



Those of the Crown jewels which were kept at St. Petersburg were taken to Moscow for the Coronation. This was a very serious proceeding indeed, for these magnificent stones were regarded as human beings, and were treated, on the journey, as dignitaries of the highest rank with a most imposing escort. Foreigners used to ask sometimes whether they might be permitted to see these wonderful ornaments in the capital. The request was usually refused, as it meant a great deal of preparation for the attendance of officials. I arranged the matter once for some tourists who, finding their time running short, and being desirous of visiting Moscow, calmly put off the appointment, although the honour had been fully explained to them. Shortly after this fiasco somebody else asked me for the same favour, but caught me at the wrong moment, when I had only just exhausted my excuses for the *gaucherie* of my other compatriots.

O'Connor took the best house available in Moscow for the ensuing festivities, and it fell to my lot to apportion the rooms. They were so few that it was impossible for us to have one each. Being obliged to visit Moscow several times in consequence, the ambassador decided to use me as an emissary to the Grand Duke Serge, the Governor-General, in connection with a dinner-party which His Excellency wished to give in honour of fifteen descendants of the Queen.

I suggested taking a letter to ascertain what date would best suit H.I.H., whose wife was sister of the reigning Empress, and grand-daughter of Queen Victoria. He was always very civil when we met, but liked things done in order, and he was very fully occupied with preparations of all kinds. It was also desirable to proceed with caution, because the Russians were not, apparently, too well disposed towards the new ambassador. His official reception at the embassy had been held soon after his arrival in Russia; about fifteen hundred invitations had been sent out, and only about five hundred people attended it. In reply to my suggestion about a letter, O'Connor said: "Oh, no; just walk in and see him about it." Fortunately he reconsidered this decision.

He worried too much about trifles, and a niggardly Treasury did not appreciate the need for special expenditure at such a time and in such a country, where great splendour was the rule. He also acted as his own major-domo, and had taken me with him to buy glass, china, and other household requisites. Regarding Moscow he was almost smothered by shoals of applications from compatriots of all degrees, and, in some cases, was expected, under instructions from London, to house and entertain some of these tourists. The Bishop of Peterborough, Dr. Creighton, was coming in order to stimulate reunion between the Church of England and the Orthodox Faith; some lady visitors were very exacting, and the Queen had commissioned Angeli to paint a picture of the historical event. He was to receive twenty-five guineas, so he said, but the advertisement was a great one for him. The accredited agents of the English Press had likewise to be considered. All the United Kingdom apparently wished to attend, and I had never known how popular I was until applicants of all kinds besought my good offices. The church, in which the actual Coronation was to take place, is really very small for an occasion of such pomp, and numbers even of the official guests could not be accommodated therein, although the congregation stands in a Greek church.

The Russians were extraordinarily unselfish, some of them actually waiving their right to be in the church in order that foreigners might take their places there. I asked Count Vorontzov-Dashkov, the Minister of the Imperial Household, for a stand ticket, so that a purely private visitor, a canon of the Church of England, might see the procession going and returning. He at once enquired whether he ought to be given a place in the church—the Cathedral of the Assumption—but, as this would have meant the exclusion of one more Russian, such a favour was quite unnecessary.

The ambassador was also greatly worried about his dinner to the Queen's relatives, for the number of those, whom he desired to invite, far exceeded the capacity of the room; indeed, at one time, he proposed to leave out certain

members of his own permanent staff in order to include various tourists and journalists, but he finally decided that this would be going too far. The Franco-Russian *Entente* had been progressing, and the French Ambassador, the Comte de Montebello, had scored a trick in the shape of a ball for the Emperor and Empress. Everything was done with that perfect taste in which the French are *hors concours*; magnificent tapestries were sent from the *Garde Meuble* in Paris—relics of the time of the Grand Monarch—and, as Madame de Montebello was the daughter of a very wealthy French trader, there was no lack of funds, public and private; it was a splendid entertainment.

O'Connor's royal dinner-party was, however, a very *chic* idea, and the list of guests was revised over and over again. One name was, of course, in all of them, namely, that of Prince Lobanov, the Foreign Minister, and the invitations were at last sent out. Unfortunately the ambassador changed his mind once more, and told Lobanov that there would not be room for him. What actually passed between the two great men is unknown to me, but the prince attended the dinner, and the story—with the usual embellishments—spread like wildfire. The party was, happily, a great success.

All of us, however, had our ears pulled more or less often: the ambassador wished to have a band to play during dinner, and I was told to engage that of the *Chevaliers Gardes*, the senior regiment in the Army. It had only brass instruments, whereas the Preobrajensky, the senior Guard's infantry regiment, had quite a good string band. Soon afterwards His Excellency changed his mind, and wanted the other band, which would have given great offence, so I decided to do nothing until after the arrival of the Duke of Connaught, and it did not occur to O'Connor to question me again on the subject. It was easy to place the cavalymen where they would not interfere with conversation.

On occasions of unusual ceremonial it is customary for great Powers—and some minor ones as well—to send special envoys, but a permanent ambassador takes precedence normally of the visiting one. The British Mission

was to consist of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, accompanied by Admiral Sir John Fullerton, representing the Navy, General (afterwards Field-Marshal) Lord Grenfell, on behalf of the Army, Colonel (afterwards Sir Alfred) Egerton, Comptroller to His Royal Highness, his charming wife, and Lord Bingham (now Lord Lucan), the Duke's aide-de-camp. Prince Golitsin, Prince Kochubey, Count Ribeaupierre and Lieutenant Orloff were also to be attached. Shortly before Their Royal Highnesses were due to arrive instructions were received that I was also to be a member of the party during their stay. This was, of course, a most pleasant surprise, and it had the further advantage that, instead of going to Moscow with the ambassador, and being plunged anew into a turmoil of constant changes and counterchanges, I remained in St. Petersburg until the arrival of the royal yacht from Copenhagen, escorted by a couple of cruisers ; one of the officers was the gallant Cradock, who lost his life off Coronel in 1914.

One of my first acts, after meeting the Duke, was to raise the question of the band, and His Royal Highness at once ranged himself on my side. As soon as he saw the ambassador he expressed his gratification that he had been able to secure the *Chevaliers Gardes*, and no further argument was possible. His Excellency made a gallant but futile attempt to recover his military attaché, who, obviously, could not be in two places at the same time.

Although France had captured the Imperial couple, we English knew that, among the many strikingly beautiful women and handsome men then in Moscow, there were none to outrival Mrs. Lancelot Carnegie and her husband, now His Majesty's Ambassador at Lisbon. We felt justifiably proud.

The weather during the whole three weeks of festivities was superb, and, as there was neither Parliament nor Treasury to limit expenditure, everything was done on a scale unsurpassable in splendour. Money was no object either officially or privately : in accordance with ancient custom the hoofs of the Emperor's charger were shod with silver for His Majesty's State entry into Moscow, and a friend of mine, Princess Orloff, was not really worried about



a disaster to her Court train, which occurred on her return journey to St. Petersburg ; there was a violent rain-storm, the baggage van leaked and the work of art was practically ruined ; it had cost about £4,000, a creation of Paquin.

Being attached to the Duke of Connaught's staff it happened that I was the only one of the military attachés in Russia who rode in the Imperial procession from the Petrovsky Palace, outside Moscow, to the Kremlin. It was like living in another age to see the old-style great glass coaches with their beautiful paintings, and the retinue was imposing enough, for four hundred and forty-six of us were entertained to luncheon at the Palace before the start.

The display of loyalty along the packed route was certainly genuine, but, riding a year later in the Diamond Jubilee procession, the truly amazing reception of Queen Victoria by her subjects was still more impressive, the temperaments of the two peoples being different : an English cheering crowd has not its equal anywhere in the world.

Every care is, of course, always taken on State occasions to provide against tragic incidents on the part of fanatics, but the measures adopted in Russia were probably the most elaborate of all. Nevertheless, the incredible happened : just at the moment of the actual Coronation, a stranger, dressed in a suit of shepherd's plaid of apparently English make, walked into the cathedral, and advanced nearly to the foot of the throne before he was seized. How could such an extraordinary thing have occurred ? I cannot say, but the fact remains, and the tourist may still be forgotten in some remote part of Siberia.

The awful catastrophe at the great national fête, which took place at the Khodinskoe Polye, near Moscow, was naturally regarded by the superstitious as being a very bad omen, and some, who ought to have known better, again believed it was due to some malign influence of the unfortunate reigning Empress. The thread of ill augury seemed to permeate everything.

I was driving to the rendezvous rather behind time, having been detained in Moscow, and was surprised to meet a long line of wagons with loads covered by tarpaulins

and blankets, not only because the route had been closed some time previously, but the Emperor and Empress could not be more than a few minutes behind me. Until my arrival on the ground it never occurred to me that the wagons were full of corpses. An enormous crowd of peasants, drawn from all parts of the empire, had collected overnight and waited patiently. Gifts from the Emperor were to be handed to each person, and barriers to control the mass of people had been erected. Its pressure had become so intense soon before the ceremony was to commence that the barriers were swept away. The number of killed was never known accurately, but it must have been thousands—men, women and children. The Emperor and Empress were criticised because the programme of amusements was not abandoned, and this criticism was still sharper when they attended the ball at the French Embassy the same evening. Whether, under the circumstances, they acted rightly or wrongly is a question each must decide for himself. The memory of the dreadful tragedy never faded, however, from His Majesty's mind ; he told me so twenty years later when we were discussing losses in war.

A deputation of the Scots Greys, under Colonel Welby, was invited to the Coronation. As regards the Emperor's uniforms he always wore that of a colonel of the Imperial Guards, or, occasionally, of some other regiment. This had been his rank when his father died, and, instead of promoting himself, he used to say that higher rank was denied to him because he had no influence behind him. The Foreign Office was again very unexpectedly generous to me at Moscow : to my surprise I received a letter from Sir Thomas Sanderson stating that Lord Salisbury thought a special grant should be made in aid of the unusual expenditure caused by the Coronation. One of my parties was honoured by a notice in *The Times*.

Hitherto my chest had been destitute of decorations. Queen Victoria, however, had instituted the Order which bears her name, and when the Duke of Connaught arrived he informed me that I was almost the first member to be appointed to it. This was followed by the Russian Order

of St. Stanislaus, which, His Royal Highness told me, the Queen approved that I should accept and wear. An uncommon incident marked the investiture of Sir Francis Grenfell: he was sitting in a bath robe, writing letters, when Prince Golitsin, in full uniform, marched into his room bearing the Russian Order of the White Eagle. On account of his bare legs the general was too shy to rise, so received the insignia sitting: no doubt he was the only individual who had been decorated under similar conditions.

My new honours led, unfortunately, to some trouble: the ambassador was annoyed that my status in the Victorian Order—membership of the fourth class—was not higher, although it was what would have been conferred on a full colonel, whereas I was merely a temporary lieutenant-colonel; he also objected altogether to my wearing the Russian decoration. Of course, the Queen's commands overrode this protest, as His Excellency must have known would be the case, but he was unfortunate in another respect: the Queen's birthday happened to fall on Sunday, May 24th, and there was to be divine service at the English church, where the Bishop of Peterborough preached an excellent sermon. It was a great occasion, and the ambassador, a Roman Catholic, was conspicuous by his absence, but had not apprised the Duke of his intention. This abstention, and one or two other matters, caused resentment in high quarters, for everything, of course, was reported to Her Majesty.

Every Court had its own system of etiquette, differing in some respects from that in vogue at others. On the day after the Coronation Their Majesties commenced the really terrific task of receiving every kind of deputation, Russian and foreign: these represented every section of the population, and the number of gentlemen and ladies, entitled to pay their respects on such an occasion, was immense. The receptions took up the best part of four consecutive days, and the Emperor and Empress were very fully occupied during any spare intervals.

Among those who attended on the second day were the foreign officers and the diplomatic body. The Emperor and Empress stood side by side some paces from the single

file of guests, and, as each one of us approached His Majesty, one bowed to him, and then, after similarly saluting the Empress, the proper thing to do was to step forward, out of the line, and kiss her hand. In fact the reception was known officially as "Kissing Hands" (*Baise-mains*). This ceremony over the visitor then backed into his original place in the gigantic *queue* and passed on.

The Russians and some of us foreigners—but not all—were aware of the proper course to pursue, but, for once, *la belle France* made a slip, for the French Ambassador omitted to kiss Her Majesty's hand. Perhaps it was not the custom for a republican representative to do this, although His Excellency was reputed to be no stranger to acts of homage where the fair sex was concerned. During these huge receptions the Empress's hand must have been kissed at least twenty thousand times, a smile being given each time in return, miles and miles and miles of smiles.

On the evening of our reception there was a State Ball with that somewhat dreary yet picturesque procession, the *Polonaise*. The Emperor and Empress marched solemnly with some of the more distinguished guests up and down the ballroom in turn, but Her Majesty omitted the usual custom of offering her hand to the French Ambassador.

The Emperor caused a magnificent album, profusely illuminated, and with the silver Coronation medal inset on the cover, to be prepared in commemoration of the Coronation, and His Majesty sent copies to the members of the Duke of Connaught's Mission, including myself. It is sad to think that our only child, who joined the Royal Flying Corps as soon as he was old enough, cannot inherit it, as he was killed a few days after his arrival on the Western Front. This gorgeous work of art—it weighs about a quarter of a hundredweight—describes every Coronation which has taken place in Russia.

The French were, nevertheless, one to the good in the sense that the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, Prince Liechtenstein, had intended giving a ball for Their Majesties, which might have outshone the French one. He was a Don Magnifico but very pleasant, and he and Vienna had



put their heads together for the occasion. Unfortunately, a death in the Hapsburg family caused the entertainment to be abandoned in favour of a dinner-party.

The Shah's brother was to represent Persia, but the monarch died meanwhile, so his relative delayed his arrival until a week after the Coronation, thereby demonstrating both grief and joy. This reminds me that, when I was at Berlin, Lascelles took me with him to attend the funeral of the Grand Duke of Oldenburg. Those old-fashioned German Courts often lacked modern domestic arrangements, but their etiquette was rigid indeed, more so than at Berlin. We duly presented our condolences to the new ruler before the funeral, and he looked truly woebegone. A few hours later we had to offer our congratulations on his accession when his countenance was wreathed in smiles. He had a very pretty and charming daughter, Princess Sophie ; her tastes lay, she told me, in country life and yachting, but Fate ordained that she should marry Prince Eitel Frederick, son of William II ; it was not a very happy union.

Moscow is in itself an extremely interesting city, but enough has already been written about it. What attracted me most were the old shops, the tower of *Ivan Veliki*, built by an Englishman, and the Foundling Hospital. We all went to see it, and found the director was a Russian general officer ; in its records was the arrival of a baby sent thither by Napoleon during his brief stay in the capital in 1812. It seemed to be excellently managed, and there was one mite which was being nursed in an incubator, a remarkable sight.

We were all delighted, of course, to have been spectators of such unparalleled festivities, of which the cost was said to have amounted to several millions sterling, and, being on the Duke's staff, many things came my way in which others did not share. It was, however, hard work of its kind, and three weeks of it sufficed. The Emperor and Empress were enormously fatigued, although they had this advantage over everybody else, that they were never kept waiting for anything to commence.

It was during this stay at Moscow that my eyes first

beheld Prince Ferdinand, the ruler of Bulgaria. One day at a big luncheon-party the Duke of Connaught, seeing him there, asked whether I had ever met him. I had not, and, although one would not like to hang a dog on account of its looks, Ferdinand certainly seemed to be a most unprepossessing person. The Duke told me that he was remarkably astute. A score of years afterwards the Emperor Nicholas gave me some instructive details about him—to be related later.

My party returned to St. Petersburg in the same luxurious manner as we came, and it was with feelings of most sincere regret that I parted from them. Just before sailing, the Duke, after thanking me in the kindest terms for my assistance—which had been only a very pleasant duty—presented me with a most handsome cigarette-case, with the royal initials affixed in brilliants.

About a week after the return of the ambassador and his staff to St. Petersburg matters did not, unfortunately, go very smoothly; in fact, relations between my chief and myself became strained. He had had a most strenuous time, amid strange surroundings, had not had much leave before coming to Russia, his health was not very good, and, somehow, we were apt to look at problems from different angles.

The particular question which led to tension was the Black Sea Fleet. In some quarters at home every new battleship laid down by the Russians caused a good deal of misgiving: the idea—already mentioned—being that, when the fleet should be considered sufficiently powerful, a *coup de main* would be made on Constantinople, and any objectors would be left to face an accomplished fact. A similar argument was used if Italy built a monster battleship while still a member of the Triple Alliance. The alarmists used to count heads, to show thereby that our navy would stand a poor chance in war.

While not a sailor my reasoning was different. Nobody doubted for an instant the physical bravery of, for example, the Russian sailors, but then, as always, there were other factors to be considered. Organisation, efficiency, discipline, value for money allotted, are of the utmost import-

ance, and an enemy wanting in all or any of these respects will fail before an equally courageous but numerically weaker antagonist who has them. Nelson and St. Vincent proved this over and over again, and, given a *Cause*—as I told the German Emperor in October 1901—our people will fight to the death as, indeed, they have since shown him.

In this particular instance, being aware of the obvious defects of the Russian Navy, my view was that we should welcome every addition to it; money would be diverted from, possibly, more useful channels, and anyway, the fleet would never effect its purpose. Sir Nicholas O'Connor, on the other hand, disagreed; he argued that, even if a Russian attack on Constantinople should fail, a terrific clash of arms was almost inevitable. No doubt he was right, but my point was that the attempt would never be undertaken until circumstances should have changed to such an extent that ample warning would be given.

This was the situation in June 1896, when the ambassador heard that the Black Sea Fleet had put to sea suddenly, and was probably heading for the Bosphorus, while the rest of the world believed it was recovering from the effects of the Coronation festivities. His Excellency repeated this information to me, without mentioning its source, and was much annoyed at my ignorance of it. For a moment he was inclined to think that I had been withholding the news in order, I suppose, to spring a dramatic surprise on him a little later.

Satisfied, at last, that such an indecent thought had not entered my head, O'Connor said that he had never before been taken unawares regarding great events, adding that I must find out at once what was taking place. This was a simple task—according to my theory—but I explained that, if such a master-stroke was in process of being carried out, time was pressing, and the principal naval authorities at St. Petersburg were the only people who could state the precise facts. The ambassador's idea had been to adopt the same tactics as those he had advocated in the case of Li Hung Chang, namely, to hang about the doors of the Admiralty. I assured him that, if the Black

Sea Fleet had put to sea, it would be back in harbour within another forty-eight hours. This was, perhaps, cutting it rather fine for a prophecy, for ships could, of course, cruise about for quite a long time. But I won with twelve hours to spare.

I hoped that the relief to His Excellency's mind would put our relations on a happier footing, but, unfortunately, we did not get on. The Foreign Office had been remarkably kind masters, and so it occurred to me to suggest to Sir Thomas Sanderson that it would be beneficial for the public service if another military attaché were appointed in my place. Always almost overwhelmed with work, he nevertheless found time to write me a long letter, of which the gist was that, instead of being a fool, I should exercise patience. He said we might all thank our stars that he was not Her Majesty's "unworthy representative," for the worry and expense of Moscow would have been "enough to make me a perfect demon." After such a remarkably handsome letter instead of a nasty snub the matter of resignation was, of course, dropped altogether by me. Yet the machine did not thereafter work very smoothly. Sir Nicholas had, I think, formed very definite views in China concerning his dealings with Russians, but Russia required to be handled otherwise than the Chinese, as I saw for myself later on.

The situation and outlook in the Far East were, however, more important than petty squabbling. Sir Nicholas, with his knowledge of affairs in the Orient, was convinced that Japan, victorious over China, would one day throw down the gauntlet to Russia in an attempt to recover the spoils of which she had been robbed by the Muscovite, aided by France and Germany. The challenge came sooner indeed than he had expected. Meanwhile there were rumours that Russia was largely reinforcing her troops in that distant region and, after sifting the various reports, it seemed to me desirable to go and see things for myself. Russian communications with the Pri-Amur (Littoral) military district, which included the naval fortress of Vladivostok, were still very bad. The Siberian railway, of which the Emperor Nicholas II as Tsarevich



had cut the first sod about five years previously, was being constructed apace, but a vast deal remained to be done. Railhead, at the end of 1896, was only a few miles east of Krasnoyarsk, whence to Vladivostok something like a couple of thousand miles remained to be built, much of it across the shorter route in Chinese territory. The original plan had been that the railway should take the longer and serpentine course on the Russian side of the Amur.

Russia would not therefore be in a position to undertake a war in that distant region until the railway should be completed, a matter of some time. She also thought, no doubt, that Japan would never venture to fight her, and even when she occupied Port Arthur, in 1898, she could scarcely have expected her possible gains to outweigh her losses if at war with England.

My departure for the Far East had to be delayed until December 1896, and some of my Russian friends, who had never been in Asia, after begging me to abandon the wild scheme, parted from me as if for the last time.





## CHAPTER XI

My journey was certain to be a most interesting one : to reach my goal, Vladivostok, I was to travel from, we may say, the Baltic to the North Pacific, through territory the whole of which was in a ring fence and under the sway of one man. This fact gave me a feeling akin to awe when starting on December 19th, 1896, and conjured up all sorts of mental visions.

Eastern Siberia—a huge expanse—being my first objective, it was desirable to get there quickly, making only brief halts at the more important places on the way. Distances are great in Russia, and it was a matter of five days to reach Cheliabinsk, the western terminus of the Siberian railroad ; it was on my journey thither that I saw gold in circulation for the first time in the empire. A night was passed on a bench at Cheliabinsk station, but my slumbers were somewhat disturbed by those flat, blood-sucking insects common to many parts of the world. The walls of the waiting-room were plastered with them, and a friendly Russian told me they were really very peacefully inclined ; it was not so in my case, but, of course, my blood was fresh and, possibly, succulent prey ; before reaching the Pacific habit had made me pretty well case-hardened.

Three days were spent at Omsk, the capital of the " Steppe " Governor-Generalship, of which a very interesting man, Baron Taube, was the ruler. The furs I had with me, although suitable enough for European Russia, would not suffice for sleigh driving in Siberia ; long felt boots, a fur jacket, and a long reindeer cloak, lined with warm skins, were additional necessities. Western Siberia has extraordinarily rich natural resources, and the soil is magnificent. Baron Taube said there were large numbers



of nomad Kirgiz in his region, and that Catherine the Great had desired to gather them into the fold of the Orthodox Church. Feeling, however, that this would be too abrupt a change from no religion at all, she had them first converted to Mohammedanism, from which they afterwards refused to budge.

The briefest acquaintance with Siberia showed the inhabitants to be on a higher intellectual level than in Russia ; education is the reason : the political exiles eked out their allowances by teaching. Nicholas II asked me once for my opinion of Siberians, and, when I told him this, he quite agreed, adding that his father, who had never been in the country, would not believe it.

A stroke of ill-luck befell me on the evening of my departure from Omsk. Before leaving St. Petersburg I was aware that one could seldom if ever get anything at the lonely post-stations except boiling water, so food had to be carried. As a reserve in case of accidents I had packed a number of tiny tins, containing concentrated soups, in a tin box. A porter had been told to look after my luggage until it should be time to put it in the train, but he failed me ; everything else was there except my soups. It seems odd that this small receptacle should have been stolen instead of something more valuable, but the probability is that the thief, having taken it in his hand, heard the contents rattle, and thought the box contained silver if not golden coins. I sincerely hope he did, for the consequences to me were very painful.

A day or two before reaching Irkutsk, in the very middle of Siberia, my food supplies ran short ; beyond a little tea and a box of sardines nothing remained when, at a post-station in the wilderness, a kind Russian, travelling westwards, offered me a piece of bread and some lard. Now a Siberian pig is at least as unclean as his Chinese brother unless you have had him hand-fed, but hunger is an excellent sauce, and I must have eaten at least three-quarters of a pound of lard with avidity. Before long, however, incipient sores began to show themselves, until finally, a huge one on my neck laid me low at Troitskosavsk.

In 1896 Prince Khilkov was the Minister of Communi-

cations ; he was a past master in railway matters, having learned them practically in the United States. His energy and resourcefulness were remarkable, and the great railway would have taken years longer to complete but for him. He had most kindly given orders that, once in Siberia, a carriage was to be reserved for me ; this was, of course, an enormous boon, as the coaching accommodation was very scanty and the passenger traffic heavy ; one could not see any distance in an ordinary carriage on account of the thickness of the foul air ; sleeping accommodation for even third-class passengers was provided, folding berths being let down at night.

Tomsk was the next place of interest after Omsk, and the prospect of seeing the celebrated " forwarding prison " there was too attractive to be missed. Stories of all kinds, relating to the horrible lot of the exiles, were, of course, well known to me, but I travelled with an open mind. The fact that I saw no instance of cruelty or oppression either in a prison, or when seeing prisoners marching along the road, does not imply that gentle treatment was the invariable rule. My view is that the anticipation of horrors, of being arrested unexpectedly in a comfortable home in European Russia, although one might have been absolutely innocent of any offence, and then to be despatched immediately to distant Siberia without being permitted even to take leave of one's own family, were quite sufficient factors in themselves to render the outlook absolutely terrible ; the mere loss of liberty is a fearful thing for any intelligent mind. Cases of actual cruelty on the part of gaolers in Siberia were, I firmly believe, exceedingly rare ; the almost incredible hardships of life in Yakutsk or Saghalien must have been as dreadful as any extra prison punishment, and, besides, the Siberians, like the European Russians, are by nature kind.

Prisoners despatched to Siberia belonged to three categories : " administrative " exiles, convicts, and criminals sentenced to transportation as in the days of Botany Bay. The first category comprised political exiles : every Russian was liable to be seized and packed off by order of the Minister of the Interior ; the system was obviously

open to the most outrageous abuse, and many an individual has been got rid of, without the semblance of a trial, on some utterly false pretext, perhaps for life, and there was no appeal. The majority of this class were banished on account of political activities, the rule in Russia being that the universal law of change did not hold good in that empire. A distinguished English general, however, told me once that "all change is to be deprecated," so he might have endorsed the Muscovite system.

The convicts consisted mainly of ordinary criminals, and they were fortunate on the whole, because there was no death penalty in Russia, except for political offences, outside the army and navy. These people passed the first portion of their sentences in prison. The third category, which might include political reformers, comprised those not deemed worthy of actual confinement, and for whom deportation was considered to meet the case. The last two classes had one side of the head shaved so that they might be more easily recognised if they should attempt to quit the district in which they were ordered to reside.

As a matter of fact convicts in prison were better off than either of the other classes : their labour in the mines or elsewhere was not very hard ; they disliked it, of course, for the Russian is naturally very lazy, but they were well fed, well clothed, better housed than at home, and had no cares. Those of good behaviour were released on ticket-of-leave after a time and, so strong is the love of liberty in the human breast, that I never heard of any convict declining a certain measure of liberty with its attendant hardships, and preferring to remain in prison, which had decided advantages : the convict's meat ration was one (Russian) pound of meat daily, in addition, of course, to other things, whereas the Cossack supervising his activities received only half a pound. The one was not put to outdoor work if the temperature was colder than twenty-four degrees below zero Fahrenheit, whereas the soldier must be prepared for sixty degrees below it. There had been instances when the escorts petitioned to be allowed the same ration as the prisoners.

The ticket-of-leave men were granted, like the exiles of the other classes, a small monthly stipend ; it was, however, so difficult to make both ends meet on it that they eked out their livelihood in various ways, that of teaching being, perhaps, the most popular, and of great service to native-born Siberians. Convicts in the prisons were also allowed to do some work on their own account, and some of them could earn as much as £30 or even more annually, and this money was placed in the savings-bank for them.

The convict class really had all it wanted, and a police inspector at Chita (east of Lake Baikal) showed me two or three letters, written by hardened criminals, in which their relatives in Russia were advised to commit an offence which would land them in Siberia. These epistles had not been forwarded ! An escaped convict was liable to death by hanging if he committed murder, but he would have to be sent before a court-martial : the ordinary tribunals had not power to inflict this sentence. It did not follow, however, that the confirming officer would sanction execution : the Public Prosecutor at Chita told me of an escaped convict, incarcerated for three murders ; after getting away he had assassinated other people, was recaptured, and my acquaintance, General Dukhovskoi, the Governor-General of the Pri-Amur (Littoral) military district, had sent him before a court-martial. This sentenced the man to death, but His Excellency could not bring himself to confirm the penalty. On the other hand suicide was not very uncommon among Russians in Siberia, especially among officers and officials.

Sentences on “ administrative ” deportees were by no means invariably for life ; when they expired those concerned might return to Russia, but numbers elected to remain in their new home ; they had become accustomed to their surroundings, and had often married there. At a solitary little post-station on the frozen Amur river, the postmaster, a pleasant, well-educated man, told me his history. He and his two brothers had been concerned in the Polish Rebellion of 1863 ; the eldest was shot by his side in action, while the youngest was wounded, but



escaped across the frontier and made his way to Mexico. My friend was captured red-handed and sent to Siberia.

He said the Siberians had been uniformly kind—there was no railway in those days, and he marched thousands of miles—but the escort on the way had been terribly strict although not savage. Fourteen years afterwards, in 1877, his freedom was restored to him, and he set out for Vladivostok to join his youngest brother. He travelled well over a thousand miles to reach the port ; on arrival there were rumours of war with England, so he was unable to obtain permission to depart. He spent the winter at Vladivostok, and then returned to his station, where he had lived ever since.

Being a postmaster he had emerged from a rebel to the status of a Government official, and told me that the young Emperor Nicholas II had created a very good impression, and was believed to possess—as he actually did possess—a really kind heart. My friend showed me with pride his most cherished piece of property, namely, the red worsted comforter, which he was wearing when captured, and he was inclined to think that, when the railway should be finished, he would return to Poland to end his days. At the time of our acquaintance he was four hundred miles from the nearest town.

During my journey from Omsk to Tomsk I saw my first political prisoner in charge of a soldier with rifle and—as was always the case in the Russian Army—bayonet fixed. He was typical of several others whom I met during my sleigh drive : about forty years of age, tall, slight, and of a delicate appearance, he might have been a barrister or a medical man ; he was bound for that dreadful locality, Yakutsk, which was said to have, very naturally, a most depressing effect on the officials themselves. Generally speaking the tendency to suicide in Siberia, which has been already mentioned, was due to homesickness, or *nostalgie*, as the French, who also suffer from it, term this malady.

At the time of my visit to the forwarding prison at Tomsk the building had been reconstructed about a couple

of years previously, and had accommodation for three thousand persons, but only about two hundred were in it on New Year's Day, 1897. In the summer months, however, it was often overcrowded; at that season of the year the custom was to despatch parties of about six hundred souls weekly for their destinations in Eastern Siberia, whereas, during the winter, this number was reduced to a hundred and fifty each week. As this information was given to me by General Lomachevsky, the Governor of the Tomsk region, it is clear that the supply of "administrative" exiles was unfailing, and amounted perhaps to some twenty thousand annually, out of a total white population of about 120,000,000.

In Tomsk prison were men, women and children, a large proportion of the total being there of their own accord. Families might, if they chose—save in very exceptional cases—accompany their deported males, and this happened very often. Truly it was a bold undertaking: to march from two to three thousand miles might well seem to be courting death from exhaustion, the journey extending over a period of many months with a short summer.

Try to imagine—but this is impossible without actual experience of the climatic conditions—what such a journey must be like in winter even for the hardiest adults. Yet children managed to survive and grow up healthy and strong, in many cases at any rate. Nevertheless, the prospect was appalling: in Central Siberia, at places like Chita, for example, there is a very short, hot summer, when fruit and other things grow in profusion, but, even there, the ground never thaws to more than a couple of feet below the surface. The only relatively fortunate ones, as regards the journey to their ultimate destinations, were isolated prisoners, who might be driven all the way.

Considerable numbers of Italians were employed in the construction of railway bridges: they were considered to be the best workmen of all in this line, and their wages varied from 6s. to 12s. daily, as far back as 1897, as against a third of these amounts paid to Russians, but

then, the latter were much less skilful and hard-working, besides being addicted to alcoholism.

After leaving Tomsk my next point was Krasnoyarsk, where a sleigh would take the place of the railway ; the actual railhead was about a hundred and thirty miles farther on, but the sleigh was likely to prove faster than the train on the unfinished line. Disaster nearly occurred, owing to the kindness of the Minister of Communications in ordering a special carriage for me in Siberia : as some of the bridges over the great rivers were not finished ordinary mortals had to get out of the train on arriving at one bank, and then they were driven in sleighs across the ice to the other bank. This was, of course, my lot also at huge rivers like the Ob, where the two stations were about five miles apart without rails between them, but the much smaller Chulim, west of Krasnoyarsk, had them, and freight wagons were hauled across by hand.

I was preparing to descend, together with the other passengers, expecting another carriage on the eastern bank, but was informed that I would be hauled across. The hour being four o'clock in the afternoon it was pitch-dark, and presently my carriage began to move. I was congratulating myself on my good fortune when suddenly there were loud cries of "Stop ! stop !" followed immediately afterwards by a tremendous crash. This sent the carriage hurtling backwards for quite a considerable distance.

When it came to a halt railwaymen ran up, and enquiry showed that the driver of a locomotive on the eastern bank, with a goods wagon attached, hearing of the arrival of a distinguished personage—as he explained later—had thought of rendering assistance, and, disobeying his instructions, had brought his engine down the steep incline on to the ice. Like a good many modern motor-cars, his brakes failed to hold, so he dashed into me at quite a respectable pace. Drink had caused his access of zeal.

No personal damage worth mentioning was done to me, but the smash had knocked over the stove, which set fire to the carriage. The fire was extinguished, but I discovered afterwards that some underclothing in a bag

had been partly destroyed by acid. Knowing that Russian railway carriages were very dimly lighted, I had provided myself with a so-called "dry" cell electric torch, together with a refill. The lamp emerged unhurt from the accident, but the refill in the bag burst, and its contents ate away some of my shirts. Electric appliances in those days were still very primitive.

On my reaching the right bank of the Chulim the station-master was in despair at the accident; he had thought I must have been killed, but, fortunately, the goods wagon, like all of its kind in Russia, was furnished with spring buffers, which broke the shock of impact. It appeared that the driver, after mishandling one who was under the special protection of the Minister of Communications, was likely to spend the remainder of his life somewhere in Yakutsk, and he was disgraced on the spot as a commencement. My intercession proved successful, I am glad to say, for accidents will happen in the most unexpected manner. A new coach was found for me: this took time to arrange, so I entered into conversation with a friendly porter at the station, Achinsk.

Like thousands of his countrymen he had been attracted from European Russia to take up railway work, as the conditions were better than he could find at home; he had finished his military service about eighteen months previously, and a year of civil life had caused him to seek new pastures. He was to have quarters, fuel, and £2 monthly, but, he said, the men were paid only every two months, although the money for wages was despatched and arrived according to plan. He was not attracted by the prospects of life in the nearest large town, Krasnoyarsk; he had a brother there, also on the railway, who told him that crime, committed by ex-convicts, was so rampant that it was really dangerous for anybody to be out after dark unarmed.

It was on account of this that a gendarme was sent to meet me at Krasnoyarsk on the following evening. The stove attendant had been transferred from the old carriage, and thought he might be ordered to remain there until repairs should be completed. He said: "Not for any-



thing in the world will I stay there ; the place is bad and dear, my pay is small, and the people are worse than all." He thereupon showed me his revolver which he always carried in towns. Krasnoyarsk is the capital of the Yenisei Government, the most westerly district of Eastern Siberia. The reputation of Eastern Siberia for crimes of violence was decidedly bad, but the explanation is simple : most of the convicts were there.

The farther I travelled towards the rising sun the more indifferent did the inn accommodation usually become, except as regards food, which was always abundant and good in the towns. My inn at Krasnoyarsk was the filthiest hitherto encountered by me, but what was one to do ? One could not sleep in the road.

The Governor happened to be absent on leave, but the Lieutenant-Governor entertained me hospitably. My stay had to extend over a couple of days in order to purchase a sleigh, and lay in some food for the long drive. One could, of course, travel in the ordinary public sleighs, which were not only small but plied only between their own stations and the adjoining ones, necessitating unpacking and repacking baggage at every stage. The Lieutenant-Governor advised me to buy one of the strong, large sleighs which had brought gold from the mines, and a very satisfactory purchase it was.

He had a nice-looking maid who helped to look after his children ; she had been deported to Siberia because she had murdered her lover ; " But," said my host, " these things will happen, and she is not likely to assassinate anybody else." She had been in his family for a considerable time, and I could not help contrasting the Russian system with our own, where mistresses are so particular about satisfactory " references ! "

One evening at Krasnoyarsk I had to send a telegram : as the office was some distance away a cab was necessary, and my landlord, on receiving the message, said he would take it himself. On suggesting that the driver could quite well do this he remarked : " You see, one has to go upstairs to the telegraph office and, if the cabman leaves his vehicle for only a few moments, it will surely be stolen."

"But then," I replied, "nobody is safe, and one must always carry this" (pointing to my revolver).

"That is so," was the answer; "the people here are dreadful; there are so many ex-convicts who have come from the East, but plenty of others, not convicted criminals, who have come from Russia to rob and murder, are quite as bad."

The police, apparently, were not in sufficient strength to be able to cope with the situation, although they had extraordinary powers; the system of Law Courts in Siberia was still in its infancy. On my way to Krasnoyarsk I had met one or two German commercial travellers, and each had asked me whether we might travel together for mutual safety. This did not appeal to me, but it seemed desirable to try and get a pleasant companion, and I mentioned the matter to the Lieutenant-Governor, who was quite of the same opinion; if, he said, a traveller was by himself, luggage would certainly be stolen from the sleigh when he went into a post-station to warm himself, and to pay the fare for the next stage. The waiter at my inn, a mild-mannered youth, remarked that there was only one sound principle to follow, namely, to shoot at once should any suspicious-looking individual approach, and make enquiries afterwards. Altogether travelling in Siberia promised to be fairly exciting, but, as a matter of fact, I lost nothing except the tins of condensed soup, and only fired my revolver once: this was when I overtook a caravan of camels, and it was desirable to alarm their conductor in order to clear the route. He only laughed, and my sleigh had to follow at a foot's pace for five or six miles.

The Lieutenant-Governor told me that, in order merely to prevent theft, Russian law did not authorise shooting under any circumstances, unless one's life was actually in peril; "But," he added, "as you are a privileged person, you could exercise your discretion!" One of the hotels was owned by an ex-convict, and all the members of his staff were of the same class; the general opinion was that, on the whole, a convict, who had served his time in prison, was "decidedly preferable" to the criminal who had simply been deported from Russia.

Enquiry resulted in my finding a very nice young Cossack officer who wanted to get to Chita ; like many others he was short of cash for a drive of more than a thousand miles ; he was delighted at the prospect of getting a free lift in return for his company ; one of us would always be in the sleigh—which was a fine, broad one—except in towns, when all the baggage would be taken out, and we got on capitally together. His luggage did not hamper us, as the whole of his worldly possessions were contained in one small suit-case. It was rather a tight fit, but not uncomfortable.

We started from Krasnoyarsk soon after daylight on January 6th, 1897, in bright weather, but there was not much snow on the ground. The first few miles were on the Yenisei through a wooded, somewhat hilly, country. The initial stage was about fifteen miles, and the ponies, three of them abreast, made good going, but, on halting for the first change, after having travelled at an average rate of ten miles an hour, it seemed to me that it would take me all my life to finish the remainder of the journey, something over three thousand miles.

On the third day, however, one got quite accustomed to the new mode of travelling. It was bitterly cold, especially at night, although the temperature did not fall more than about thirty degrees below zero Fahrenheit : it was the piercing wind which chilled one. At the end of each stage one had to go into the post-house to get warm again, and this is the reason why the drivers could only drive one stage, and were changed like the ponies. After a time the cold penetrates through all the warm clothing and furs in the world, and one's breath freezes on the collar. In the railway accident at Achinsk, some ten days previously, my nose had been damaged, and, until the skin healed, it was necessary to be careful that it did not get frost-bitten.

Irkutsk, the capital of Central Siberia, was my immediate objective, there being nothing but some straggling hamlets between it and Krasnoyarsk, nearly seven hundred miles, and forty-four stages. The mails were, of course, the first consideration, and the number of teams which they

required varied. After them I took precedence with my special pass, and there was much traffic ; in some places passengers were encountered, private individuals, who had been waiting two days or even longer for ponies. My drivers, from start to finish, were capital fellows ; I began by tipping them on an unusually liberal scale, and they passed the word along. If my sleigh had not been of the monster type, very wide at the back, we would have been upset several times before reaching the Far East, as severe skidding was not infrequent ; many people suffered in this way. Irkutsk was reached in one hundred and fifty-two hours : the average of nearly four and a half miles an hour was remarkably good ; it does not sound fast, but it was more than double the usual speed, and was, as a rule, maintained throughout, except where there were some bad or dangerous stretches. It took me just under ten weeks to reach a railway again, about half of that time being spent in actual driving.

Arriving at Irkutsk on Russian New Year's Eve there was nothing to be done until the day after that great festival, when I paid my respects to the Governor-General, General Goremykin. He was, at first, a little cool in his welcome. On showing him, however, a letter from the Minister of War to the effect that all the principal authorities had been warned of my coming, he became at once very friendly, explaining that he was under the Ministry of the Interior, and had nothing to do with the other Department. This friction was not uncommon in Russia.

Goremykin spoke only his own language ; he told me that, when he was a young officer, he had once obtained leave to travel abroad for two months, an unusually long period. He made for Paris, but knew nobody there who could speak Russian ; this bored him to such an extent that he cut his holiday short, returned to his regiment, and had never since quitted his native land. He enquired whether there had been any trouble with robbers on the road, and was evidently relieved to hear that all had gone well. It appeared that the drivers often stood in with thieves and told them when a wealthy man was travelling : as Russians of this description always carried large sums



of money on their person they were attractive prey ; they knew nothing of cheques or letters of credit.

Irkutsk, a place of some sixty thousand inhabitants—the largest city in Siberia—had nothing to keep me, but Lake Baikal was not yet fully frozen over, and, as there was nothing of military interest in the local capital, my time was spent chiefly in idling about the Chinese shops, of which there was a large number, some of them with excellent and very cheap furs. After a stay of three days I decided to wait no longer, but to drive round the southern shore of Baikal ; this would lengthen my journey by two or three days, possibly longer, on account of the narrowness of the track, which was cut in places out of the high mountains, but time might be saved in the long run.

On the day of my departure, however, news came that the ice would be practicable possibly in a few hours' time. The lake would, of course, never freeze by reason of low temperatures ; it is much too vast in extent, and has also hot springs in it, but the great rivers in the east bring down enormous floes of ice until eventually the entire surface is covered to a depth usually of several feet. There are, however, weak spots due to hot springs, and these must be avoided if disaster is to be averted.

Leaving Irkutsk at six o'clock in the afternoon we arrived at the west shore at three o'clock on the following morning. We floundered into two nasty places, where the Angara had made deep floods ; the current was too swift there for the water to freeze sufficiently hard. My "dry" electric torch was, of course, frozen long previously, but the *yamshchik* (driver) got off his seat and helped the ponies, bringing us through safely, when he remarked : "Praise be to God, I was afraid we would all be drowned." Before reaching Lake Baikal we heard a most extraordinary noise, which sounded like huge peals of compressed thunder, if anybody can understand this description ; it was caused by the packing of the immense ice-floes ; a dismal sound it was in the dark night, while the din of the rushing and partly frozen Angara was very impressive. This river, one thousand three hundred miles long, rises near the lake, and is torrential owing to the altitude of its source.

At Listvenichnaya, the post-station on the west shore, half a dozen sleighs with their travellers had been waiting for some days to cross. The ice had formed about forty-eight hours prior to my arrival, and was now considered to be passable with dangerous spots in places. We decided to go on, but had to wait until daylight; drivers were afraid to attempt the crossing in the dark, and fresh ponies had to be hired from a local peasant, as it was considered too risky to use the regular post-ponies.

The little house was crammed; among the travellers were some Russian carpenters and other workmen, returning to European Russia at their own expense: they told me they had been engaged by sub-contractors for railway work for £5 monthly and bonus, whereas at home they could only earn about half that sum. The whole thing was, however, a fraud: their hirer did not pay them more than £4 a month, when the unfortunate men discovered that their contracts, having been made in taverns, were illegal and void, the sub-contractor, no doubt, pocketing the balance. They had no means of redress, and had started on their return journey as soon as they had scraped enough money together. East of Lake Baikal large numbers of Chinese were employed, but they were too clever to bind themselves by contract: they were, as usual, splendid workers.

After a few hours' rest in my sleigh—there was no available space on the floor of the post-house—I awoke at eight o'clock to find the lake covered by a thick fog. As the distance to the opposite shore exceeded considerably that from Dover to Calais, the prospect was not at all inviting. All of us held a conference to decide whether to attempt the passage, or wait, or take the much longer route by land. Two more sleighs had arrived after me, and, as the drivers were all prepared to go on, we resolved unanimously on this course, setting out at ten o'clock, eight vehicles, one behind the other.

Just before leaving the post-house a traveller appeared from some dark recess: he had crossed the day before, had avoided one bad spot, and tumbled into another near the western shore; he and the driver managed to reach land,

but the ponies and sleigh were lost. The Siberians call a weak place like this a *shchol* (flaw or crevice), and, for some reason or another, one will be formed quite unexpectedly, so that drivers have to keep a sharp look-out.

To be on the safe side they made us all dismount, and one of them enquired whether anybody had a compass. My Cossack officer was the first to produce his, and as we caught a glimpse of the sun for a few moments, I was able to check it by means of my watch, when we set a course between us. My map was handy, and the leading sleigh was pointed in the right direction, but the outlook was rather chilly in more senses than one, for the problem was : how could the lead driver possibly keep his course ? If he should miss it we might easily head northwards up the lake, which is several hundreds of miles long. Instinct kept him right ; about half-way across the fog lifted, and there we saw, some fifteen miles distant, our goal. The air was so extraordinarily clear that we seemed to be not more than a couple of miles from it.

A halt was called, and then each driver took his sleigh on to firm ice, avoiding a nasty place, we following on foot. On the whole the ice was good enough to let us travel about ten miles an hour. While we were all crowded together, conversing and stretching our legs, a terrific crash sounded just underneath our feet : a Russian immediately whipped out his revolver, and, before anybody could stop him, fired at the ice in order to test its strength ! It was, of course, so hard that the bullet glanced off : there was a piercing shriek when it was discovered that the bullet had just grazed the arm of a child standing close by.

Fortunately nothing worse happened, but we held a Council of War, and decided, unanimously, to relieve the owner of his weapon until the crossing was finished. There would be no robbers on the lake, and, if there were, everybody else was armed, while my Cossack assured us that his sabre could slice a man's head off, cutting through any amount of furs with extreme nicety. This was the only occasion that I have sat in judgment on a Russian, being appointed President of the Court as the senior of the

only two officers present ; the delinquent was really rather pleased at being rendered harmless.

It was, in truth, a very interesting drive under all the circumstances, and certainly the instinct of the particular driver, who happened to be in front, was marvellous. For the first portion of the passage my sleigh was in front ; after a few miles, pretending to be very brave—which was by no means the case—I brought up the rear. This was the post of danger, as, should the ice give way, every other vehicle had a better chance of escape, and the lake is dreadfully deep. Half-way we formed two columns in line abreast, as sailors, I believe, say ; the drivers had become suspicious of the carrying capacity of the ice as we were nearing some hot springs, but nothing happened.

Lake Baikal is subject to violent storms which get up with remarkable rapidity, and there was current a good story of a Russian admiral making his way to Vladivostok. This was in the early autumn ; he embarked on the steamer, and became very indignant when he was told the ship would be delayed some hours in starting, as a local hurricane was expected. "I am a sailor," quoth His Excellency, "and know all about oceans and lakes ; you must get under way immediately." The Swedish captain—a former deep-water seaman—was not compelled to carry out his wish, but decided to do so, and await events. Sure enough the storm came like a bolt from the blue, and, after a terrific battering, he returned to his port of departure. The admiral was said to have continued his journey by land. Our sleighs did the distance of more than thirty miles in just over four hours with some rough places.

On reaching the east bank the air felt quite warm, although the thermometer showed just zero Fahrenheit ; everything is comparative. The railway was under construction at several points east of Lake Baikal, convict labour being employed, as the frozen soil rendered earthworks most difficult in winter. I resolved to spend a night at the little town of Verkhni-Udinsk, my junction for Kiakhta and then Chita, where the chief hotel, highly recommended, was not very well equipped : on asking the maid to complete the toilet accessories, she promptly brought me a round



cooking-pot which had been under repair. The next day, during the midday meal, I recognised it again : it was now serving as a pastry dish ; very nice tarts they seemed, and it was thought rather odd of me to refuse them.

In Eastern Siberia a police officer told me that it was necessary at times, for administrative reasons, to march political prisoners together with convicts, but they would be lodged separately on the way. In view of the long distance still before me it was pleasant to reflect that the number of miles in a degree of longitude where I was travelling was less the farther north one was from the Equator, but sleigh journeys, once you are accustomed to them, have their advantages, for one can arrange to start at any time, and then change your mind. A fine river affords capital going sometimes, but there is one weak point about it, which necessitates caution : a stream, for instance, is from six to twelve hundreds yards wide during much of its course, but it narrows occasionally ; this causes tremendous pressures underneath the surface at certain seasons, due to water rushing downstream, which may burst the ice ; many fatal accidents have occurred from sleighs coming on one of the these places unawares, especially in the dark : if not drowned one may be frozen to death by the water or thin ice on the surface. We had some not very serious trouble in this respect, but my drivers were sober, and, usually, warning was given at post-stations of dangerous spots. These *nalyedy* are, I believe, termed "river thunder" in North America, from the noise they make when forming.

It occurred to me to have a look at Troitskosavsk, a small garrison town, a couple of miles short of Kiakhta, the Russian emporium for caravan tea ; Kiakhta is on the Russo-Chinese border, and, just over the line, is a small Celestial town, which I visited ; it is thoroughly old-fashioned. The cold had been intense, especially at night ; my spirit thermometer, in a bag of clothing, froze once, and the only available accommodation at Troitskosavsk was a small inn. My neck had swollen to such dimensions and was so painful that I had to lie in bed for a week. My situation was desolate, and the proffered services of the

local hospital assistant did not attract me. A huge abscess burst, and then I was able to get about again. The trouble had been caused, as I learned afterwards, by scurvy, and my sorrows were not over until about three years afterwards. How I cursed the thief who had taken my soups at Omsk !

Before branching off southwards from Verkhni-Udinsk for Troitskosavsk I had been strongly advised not to go there at all, as smallpox and diphtheria were raging. The Russians thought nothing of the latter, as they had supplies of serum in all centres, but smallpox they disliked. It certainly was raging : during my stay of about a week the number of coffins which passed my window seemed sufficient to account for a very big proportion of the inhabitants. The Chinese do not mind smallpox : when one child gets it they put the others with it. During a staff ride once in North China we came upon a large village where all the children had the disease, or were recovering from it ; it was lovely weather, and they were in the open in arms or afoot ; they were much interested in us, having rarely, if ever, seen white people, and toyed with our accoutrements. The medical officer with my party showed us the different stages of the disease ; it was very interesting.

My visit to Troitskosavsk brought me under the suspicion of the local commandant ; he could not understand why a man, making for Vladivostok, should wish to come to such a place. My reason was that I wished to see whether the garrison had been increased, and the production of my official papers did not help me much at first, because my Cossack officer had left part of his uniform at Verkhni-Udinsk together with his documents, a very foolish thing to have done, for he was sent for to explain himself. We had both been taken for spies, but eventually both commandant and police were satisfied as to our identity, as my Cossack happened to stumble on an old acquaintance, who vouched for him.

Living in Eastern Siberia was usually very expensive ; candles were ten times as costly as in European Russia, and three times the price of those in Irkutsk, relatively quite

near ; a bottle of very common claret was twenty-four shillings, more than first-class champagne in St. Petersburg.

On my return to Verkhni-Udinsk I found an artillery officer, Lieutenant Petrenko, whose battery had marched from Russia to be stationed at Nerchinsk, in Eastern Siberia. The Governor-General at Khabarovka, General Dukhovskoi, had deputed him to meet me and accompany me to his Head-quarters. He was a delightful companion, so much so that I got leave for him to go as far as Tokio with me : this was a very illuminating experience, as he had never previously seen the sea. I sent him on ahead, however, to get rooms for me at Chita, as I did not intend to separate myself from my Cossack until he should arrive at his destination.

Chita was a very important centre before the railway was commenced, and the Military Governor, General Matsievsky, was most friendly to me personally, although inclined to be somewhat of an Anglophobe ; we had many arguments, and usually agreed to differ. It was a few hours before reaching Chita, on January 31st, 1897, that I experienced the truth of what I had hitherto considered to be a traveller's tale : one of my shafts snapped off where it joined the swingle-tree ; it was shod with a piece of iron about a foot in length, and, in unhooking one of the ponies, my bare hand just touched the metal for an instant. The sensation was exactly as if it had been plunged into boiling water, and my palm was badly blistered for several days. All things considered, sleigh driving was not disagreeable, for some of the country was very picturesque, and a frozen waterfall is a beautiful sight. Sometimes it is advisable to change to wheels where there is no snow, or two sleighs may be used, one for the passengers and another for the baggage, so as to lighten the load. On many stages, east of Lake Baikal, we often were obliged to have five ponies, all abreast, or even six, when four would be abreast and two in front with a postillion.

The hotel at Chita was renowned for its luxury, and it was certainly very comfortable, with the additional merit of a Russian bath. This was in a room about twenty feet by twenty, and a dozen feet in height. Tiers of benches

rose from the floor to near the ceiling, and the air on the floor was pleasantly warm, being heated by a furnace burning wood. By degrees one mounted higher and higher, until the temperature on the top benches was terrific; the descent was made gradually so as to cool off, when one could finish with cold water. These baths are splendid, and were immensely appreciated by me, as, for various reasons, my clothes had been on my back for twelve days and nights, often in very unpleasant surroundings.

Before there was any idea of a railway Chita had a very bad reputation indeed as compared with other places of evil repute in Siberia; the Emperor Nicholas I was said to have selected it as an efficient cooling place for some of those hotheads who mutinied against him when Alexander I died in 1825. Numbers of rebels, who had escaped execution, were deported to Chita, and were accompanied, in many instances, by their families. Exile to Siberia was a valid ground for divorce, and Nicholas was not, at first, disposed to allow any families to share the punishment; on relenting he, however, ordained that all children born there to mutineers should be illegitimate.

He was a very autocratic man, yet not devoid of humour of a kind; he was present at a masked ball in St. Petersburg when some society butterfly recognised her Sovereign. Giggling, she approached the ruler and said: "I know who you are." As the Emperor took no notice of the fair one she repeated her remark, whereupon he replied: "And I know you."

"I am sure you do not," was the answer.

"Yes, I do; you are a fool!"

As the years passed Chita became a sort of collecting station for rascals and criminals, who were largely reinforced by others of similar types from Russia after the Tsarevich—afterwards Nicholas II—had cut the first sod of the great railway, whose importance is chiefly political; it cannot be compared with transcontinental lines in North America, as anybody, who has travelled by rail through the Rocky Mountains, can testify. Their huge engineering difficulties, and the manner in which these were overcome, are in a class apart.



Chita was also an important military centre, and my stay there was prolonged for nearly three weeks. The Governor did not at all approve of my seeing all that I wanted to see, but he consented to telegraph to the Governor-General, who promptly put matters right, and Matsievsky then became most cordially helpful; we had become better acquainted. In fact, my stay in the capital of Transbaikalia was, on the whole, one of the most interesting periods of my journey from a military as well as from a personal point of view.

When new army units were to be raised in the Russian Empire it was customary to form them first and then publish the orders for the increase later. It was not therefore a matter of surprise to find that some changes, of which I had heard rumours in St. Petersburg, were either an accomplished fact, or else were in process of being carried out. They would not interest any reader, but all formations of first-line troops in Eastern Siberia were maintained on a war footing; this was only natural, because of the immense distances which reservists would have to travel. The grand total, however, was trifling when we think of the issues at stake.

The Franco-Russian alliance was, on the whole, popular, but attention was riveted mainly on forthcoming events in the Far East. They cast their shadows before them, and General Matsievsky, together with his Chief of the Staff, Major-General Sandetsky, made no secret of Russia's intention to acquire Port Arthur. Agreement had been reached with Peking for the railway to cross Manchuria; there was nothing startling in this of itself, as the longer route along the Amur—which separates Russia from China—would have been much more costly, and would have traversed a mostly barren region instead of a very rich one. Both those officers, and many other people, told me that the new Russo-Chinese Bank was merely a cloak for the Russian Government. Matsievsky, commenting on this thrust at British interests, remarked that, if England had stood in Russian shoes, she would have had Constantinople and Port Arthur long ago.

His was not an easy post: in his huge and thinly

populated domain he had to cover about four thousand miles annually, on wheels or in sleighs, in order to carry out his numerous inspections. His civil duties were decidedly onerous: large numbers of convicts had been set free after the Coronation of 1896, and their numbers had been largely augmented by the arrival of undesirables from Russia when the railway was taken in hand. During my stay the robberies became so numerous that the local paper said the place was in a panic. There were less than a score of police for about fifteen thousand inhabitants, and some of the robbers were very daring. Curiously enough the worst hours in which to venture abroad were between seven and nine o'clock in the evening, for the rogues were decidedly early birds; this may have been due to the fact that the Chitans—the honest ones—remained barricaded indoors after nine as a rule. A church was robbed during my visit, and even General Sandetsky himself was attacked and robbed at the same time. Had he been killed Matsievsky would, no doubt, have laid a more than heavy hand on any suspects.

One gang was particularly dangerous: the leader was a fine, powerful man, speaking German, and he was attended by three others. His plan was to accost somebody on some pretext or another, when his subordinates would close up from behind, and go through him. I never went out after dusk without a loaded revolver ready to shoot at anybody attempting to talk to me! It carried a heavy bullet which would, an American friend of experience in this matter once told me, keep anybody quiet for at least twenty minutes, whereas a small calibre weapon does not always by any means fulfil its purpose. In towns and villages in Siberia one frequently saw notices asking for some reliable traveller to join the advertiser for safety's sake.

Chita was a very hospitable place, and, when the day's work was finished, all respectable sections of society met on equal terms. I made friends with a very wealthy merchant, Kolesh by name; he had been a peasant, drafted to serve in Eastern Siberia, and had remained and married there on the expiration of his colour service.

Before my time he had become one of the leading merchants of the place, and had a very cultured and pleasant family of girls. Another leader of local society was a man called Kuznetsov : he had been, in his younger days, a political assassin, for which he had served a term in prison in Transbaikalia, working in the Imperial mines. As time passed he regained his civil rights, had founded a very interesting museum at Chita and a home for orphan children of exiles ; by trade he was a photographer and a very interesting man to meet.

As usual in winter smallpox was very bad in the district ; the Governor's little girl caught it just before I was to dine with him, but the party was not postponed ; she recovered, fortunately, but I inspected a girls' school one day—rather out of a military attaché's line—when more than a hundred pupils out of a total of two hundred and thirty-seven were absent owing to this disease.

An officer in a Cossack regiment, Captain Koenig, was introduced to me ; he had been transferred, as he was badly off, from the St. Petersburg military district to Transbaikalia, and had ridden from Krasnoe Selo to Chita, a distance of more than three thousand two hundred miles in four and a half months, riding a horse with a strong dash of the Arab in him. This animal was twenty years of age when he accomplished the journey, was not shod, and his legs were very clean comparatively, when I saw him.

In this country people often say they would visit some place if it were not so far away, but, in Siberia, women thought nothing of distance. I met the wife of a colonel commanding a regiment, Madame Vorobiov, who travelled to and from Russia annually ; arriving at Chita in September, she spent the winter there, and, in the spring, returned to Europe for one month in order to see her young daughter ; she then came back to her home in Transbaikalia, thus enduring a vast amount of discomfort and some risk every year. Travelling thousands of miles on wheels or in sleighs was not cheap, and must have cost her not less than sixpence per mile, including tips for the drivers—say £25 to every thousand miles. The fortunate people were Ministers of State, who had occasion to visit

Siberia: the number of ponies per vehicle varied from three to six according to the state of the road; taking four as an average, and allowing two carriages for so important a man as a minister, he would require eight ponies for each stage. As he was allowed thirty-six, and could travel without paying for any, except for tips, one journey to Chita and back, for instance, was quite a profitable undertaking, if he adopted this system.

Some rivers, the more shallow ones, froze, of course, to the bottom; gold was then obtained in the following manner: if the depth did not exceed seven feet, blocks of ice were cut out and melted; the water ran off, and the gold, being heavier, lay free. This was the system in force on the Vitim River in Yakutsk, which flows into the Lena. There were great openings for sport in Eastern Siberia, including magnificent tigers, much larger than the Bengal species; they became very aggressive in winter owing to hunger, and I saw one or two skins at lonely post-stations on the Amur.

One used not to hear anything about ferocity in war except, perhaps, as a necessary accompaniment of that evil, but I met a member of the General Staff at Chita, by name Manakin, who had returned not long before from a reconnaissance in Manchuria. We saw a good deal of each other, and he was of a very gentle disposition. He remarked one day that war is such a dreadful scourge that he believed the kindest course to pursue would be to slaughter men, women and children indiscriminately in order to stop a campaign as soon as possible.

Among other entertainments in my honour at Chita was a ball at the club; most of the members and their families, who were not laid low with smallpox, attended, and my health was proposed at supper not, as was usual, by the principal official present, but by a young and very charming lady. This took me quite by surprise, but I did my best to rise to the occasion; the Governor said my speech was a very good one, but then, he was a very kind-hearted man.

It was now time for me to be moving on if Vladivostok was to be reached by the last week in March to catch a



steamer, so my departure from Chita was fixed for February 18th, 1897, as it was certain that travelling at night along the Amur would be impracticable at times owing to the *nalyedy*. Nearly three weeks in the local capital had enabled me to get a thorough grasp of the situation which may be summed up thus : Japanese pretensions on the mainland were to be nipped in the bud ; preparations were being made to enforce this policy by force of arms if necessary. This task was considered to be an easy one ; although Russia was not yet in a condition to carry on a campaign, on a great scale, in the Far East, the belief was that Japan would never venture to try conclusions with such a mighty Power. The gradual reinforcement of the Russian troops was considered to be a sufficiently broad hint that she had better not make the attempt. My knowledge of the Empire of the Rising Sun was, at the time, practically nil, but, considering the respective resources of the two nations, the odds seemed to be in favour of the Muscovites. The situation was intensely interesting, but seven years were to elapse before fresh factors enabled me to form a definite opinion.

Starting from Chita we followed the river and were rather unfortunate : the route was just practicable, and, on changing ponies, we continued our journey until stopped by the shouts of the incoming mail drivers on the opposite side of the river. They said new rifts had just formed on our bank, and that we would be drowned if we went on. The ponies were exhausted, and could not haul my sleigh to the other side, so there was nothing for it but to get out—Petrenko and I—so as to lighten the load, climb the steep bank, and trudge a couple of miles in the snow in our heavy furs and long felt boots.

We all helped to pull the sleigh off the river, but it was very difficult. As we walked faster than the ponies could travel in the rough ground we distanced it, and were picked up by a friendly Cossack, who took us on to the next post-house, my sleigh arriving an hour later ; it had taken six hours to cover the twenty-four miles—a long stage. My Cossack, Mikhailushkin, had, of course,

remained at Chita with his regiment, and we parted with mutual regret.

We passed hundreds of men at work blasting and bridge making; sleepers had been laid in places, while, between Chita and Nerchinsk, there was actually an engine and ballast train, the first I had seen since my departure from Krasnoyarsk. Here the Onon joins another stream, and the river is then called the Shilka; a good many *nalyedy* were expected; in places where a river freezes to the bottom and a big rush of water comes down in February and March, this must force its way through the ice somewhere.

After three pleasant days spent at Nerchinsk, where Petrenko's battery was quartered, Strietensk was reached, and a halt had to be called for a night; I do not remember ever having seen such a collection of vermin in any other place, and this is saying a good deal, while the toilet arrangements were the same as at Verkhni-Udinsk. My next objective was Blagovieshchensk on the Amur. We struck this great river, close to a straggling village, where it is formed by the junction of the Argun and Shilka, and flows thence into the North Pacific. There was no difficulty about ponies, as the Governor-General had ordered them to be always at my disposal; they were extraordinarily hardy, and never had more than eight hours' rest, often less, but they did not get sufficient forage, poor beasts. We saw only two wolves, of which a considerable number were said to be along the Amur, but there was a lot of caravan traffic bound from Tomsk to Blagovieshchensk.

This town, the capital of the Amur region, was reached in thirteen days from Chita, very good going indeed, considering the halts at Nerchinsk and Strietensk, for some eleven hundred miles. With practice one can tell the speed at which the ponies are travelling by listening to the sound of the bells on their necks.

General Arseniev was the Governor of that centre, which was very important commercially; it was said that twenty millionaires (say £100,000) lived there. It was interesting from the fact that, when the surrounding

region was incorporated into the Russian Empire about the middle of the nineteenth century, it was agreed by treaty that certain Chinese settlements, on the left bank of the Amur, should remain there under Chinese and not under Russian jurisdiction. They numbered then some eight thousand inhabitants and, at the time of my visit in 1897, they had not increased to any appreciable extent. Everything was very peaceful when I was there, and I went over the frontier in order to call on the Chinese Governor. Three years afterwards, however, the world was shocked by the news that practically all these colonists had been massacred by order of the Russian Governor.

Being as they were, in Russian territory, problems of various kinds were constantly arising between the respective authorities, and Arseniev told me that it was, at times, an awkward state of affairs. The settlers themselves gave no trouble, but the Chinese Governor-General at Tsitsihar, to whom the local representative near Blagovieshchensk was subordinate, was difficult occasionally. This friction had been accentuated by more or less unauthorised Russian reconnaissances in Manchuria after it was arranged for the railway to run through that territory.

Eventually the Russian Governor lost his head ; he believed that there was to be a Chinese rising, and the colonists were ordered to cross the Amur. Some delay was inevitable before this order could be carried out, and the Russian Governor, in a panic, authorised a ruthless slaughter. He was then represented as a savage at heart, although he had appeared to be of a very mild disposition. He had served for some years in the Far East, and knew how docile his Chinese were ; I cannot even now imagine what it was which caused him to become so revoltingly brutal. All this occurred after my departure from Siberia, but, when I was there, the universal opinion among all classes was that Manchuria would soon become in fact a Russian province.

Blagovieshchensk had a population of nearly forty thousand, and it also included some curious characters. The Chief of Police, Diedrichs, was a very interesting man. Among other things he told me that the proprietor

of my hotel, calling himself Avgustovsky—or, as one may say, Mr. August—was suspected of being a murderer who had eluded justice ; his papers were apparently in order, and he was supposed to have been an officer in the army.

He had been at Blagovieshchensk for about four years, living, at first, from hand to mouth. As time passed things improved—possibly he had funds accumulated by crime—and he became the principal landlord in the place. When I was staying at his house he was about to erect a brewery, and, altogether, was a wealthy man. He always refused resolutely to be photographed ; my police friend had often schemed to get his picture, but in vain.

A more curious thing had happened to a mayor of Chita : a sleigh, carrying the mails, had been robbed, and the official in charge was killed. Through some fluke of fortune the mayor was suspected of being the instigator of the crime, was arrested, proved to have been the actual murderer, sent before a court-martial and hanged. The Governor-General had, for once, changed his mind about not inflicting the death penalty.

One could not live any time in Russia without learning something about furs, and, in Siberia—the home of the finest sables and beaver—one heard a great deal about them. In the capitals of Europe if anybody wants Kamchatka or black Siberian sables there always appears to be a sufficient supply, and the same is the case respecting Kamchatka beaver. The fact is that, in very many cases, the skins are not what they are represented to be, but are prepared with such skill at Leipzig and a few other places that only an expert of very high order can distinguish them from the real article.

The Russian Government purchased all sea beaver, of which only eight were caught in 1896, the price paid being about £120 for each skin. The principal fur merchant in the Far East was Ty-Phun-Tai, a Chinese ; a visit to his store-rooms was very interesting (at Khabarovka) ; large rooms were full of valuable furs, sables being tied into bundles of twenty each, all lying about the floor.



One could, of course, select any bundle, the price for it varying according to the average quality, and whether it included one or two of the rarest skins. Prices in those days were rising, but now they are beyond all reason, trash fetching huge prices. Soon after returning from my journey, a very wealthy lady in London told me with pride that her sable cloak had cost eight hundred guineas. At the time of the Coronation at Moscow, in 1896, Ty-Phun-Tai was permitted to present the Empress with a similar garment worth, in Europe, £9,000 even in those days. Several hundred skins had been used in its manufacture.

After spending a very pleasant and interesting week at Blagovieshchensk, it was necessary to resume my travels in order to reach Khabarovka, the residence of the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, General Dukhovskoi. I had by this time done so much travelling that the distance to that centre, about six hundred miles, seemed to be no more of an undertaking than a fifteen-mile drive to a ball used to be in my subaltern days. A good word must be put in for my criminal, the hotel proprietor at Blagovieshchensk ; his prices were considerably less than those at Chita, which, in London, would almost have sufficed for champagne baths.

Dog teams could have been used for this last section of my drive, but they were, of course, much slower than ponies, covering perhaps about forty-five miles daily, but they rested at night. My ponies were capital, for we reached our destination in four days and a half, an average of a hundred and thirty miles in twenty-four hours.

Khabarovka was, of course, a very important place, and my reception was, as usual, most hospitable ; both the Governor-General and Madame Dukhovskoi were kindness itself, and she was glad to meet somebody who knew her relatives, the Golitsins, in St. Petersburg. All the information which I required about the intended increase in troops was readily placed at my disposal, and it was more than ever borne in upon me that Russia would, if necessary, fight for the control of Manchuria.

My sleigh mileage, from Krasnoyarsk to Khabarovka, totalled a trifle over three thousand miles, so I knew pretty well all there was to learn about this form of transport. When a change was made to wheels, the sleigh was dragged along with the baggage.

One outstanding fact was patent to my mind: the wealth of Siberia, from West to Far East, was incalculable, whether in agriculture, or in mineral wealth of all kinds. The habitable portions of that immense region have scarcely been scratched as yet, and centuries may elapse before full advantage is taken of the untold resources. Capital and Labour will, no doubt, have rich rewards in the long run.

My work in Siberia was finished practically at Khabarovka, and it took me a dozen hours to reach the railhead on the Usuri, where I was to catch a ballast train going south. For two hundred and fifty miles the rails were laid in snow and, as it was beginning to get dangerous, my train was not guaranteed to get through to its destination. Everything went well, however, and my party was, at any rate, quite warm in the caboose. This was a much better plan than driving all that distance. Part of the sleighs route was so dangerous at that time—towards the end of March—that one officer, who started three or four days before I did, had to purchase ponies outright; the owners would not hire at any price, but he got through safely.

The regular train service between Vladivostok and the North terminated about half-way to Khabarovka, and there was a good deal of confusion at the terminus; this confirmed my opinion, formed when in Transcaspia more than two years previously, that Russian military railway engineers are not as efficient as they ought to be; no doubt the same is the case to-day, for nations take a very long time to unlearn their customs. The weather was what we would call decidedly cold, but the atmosphere felt relatively so warm that I walked about in ordinary clothes and without a fur cap.

Vladivostok was interesting merely as a fortress. The harbour is not particularly easy of access, and is liable

to thick fog. In the early nineties the Russians were astonished one day, when it cleared off, to find a British squadron quietly at anchor. Sir E. Fremantle was the daring admiral who took this course, and, after his visit, it was requested that not more than one—perhaps two—war vessels should visit abroad unless special arrangements were made previously. Such a feat would have been deemed absolutely impossible of execution had it not been an accomplished fact, and none but British officers would have attempted it.

At Vladivostok I was, as usual, most hospitably entertained by the Governor, Lieutenant-General Unterberger, and, prowling about the shops, saw the difference between the Kamchatka sables and another very good quality, namely, the Amur kind. The price of each of the former was, on the spot, about 70s., whereas the other could be bought for just half that sum. Of course, the cost of transport overland to Europe increased all figures enormously, and then the retail traders' profits commenced.

I caught a steamer for Nagasaki after three days in the Russian port; she belonged to the Volunteer Fleet, and was the first to sail after navigation was opened. There was some ice to negotiate, but nothing to delay my faithful Petrenko and myself. On the first occasion when a vessel, in which I was travelling, encountered ice we were going into Sevastopol one morning about eight o'clock. Reading in my berth, I was startled by a sound which seemed exactly as if the lower part of the ship was being cut away by a very rapidly revolving circular saw. Skipping hurriedly into some garments and dashing on deck I discovered that the horrible noise was due to the steamer making her way through ice.

Even in far-off Eastern Siberia I found the same prejudice against the unfortunate Empress: absolute devotion for the Emperor, but Her Majesty could do nothing right in the eyes of some of those who were related to important Russian families; it was very distressing to hear the criticisms, some of them quite devoid of foundation.

After my return to Europe I was invited to give a

lecture, at the Royal Artillery Institution at Woolwich, relating to my travels. In those days the official mind was against any information about anything becoming public property; Sir Thomas Sanderson said this was like the "laws of the Medes and Persians." On pointing out that political matters would not be introduced at all, consent was given, provided my lecture was reduced to writing and censored by the War Office. Nobody there in high position seemed desirous of editing except Colonel (afterwards General Sir Francis) Clery, known throughout the army as "Minor Tactics"; a rising man, he was a great student of military matters.

Soon after beginning his task he came to the conclusion that he had better abandon it, because, as he very sensibly remarked, he was not in a position to form a sound judgment; the thing was not in his line, and he thought the Foreign Office should bear the onus. Sanderson then actually took the trouble to read the wretched manuscript, and not a word was deleted. Things have changed since those days.



## CHAPTER XII

THE journey to Vladivostok had been fairly equally divided, as regards mileage, between rail and sleigh, the former accounting for three thousand six hundred miles, and the latter for four hundred less. My ship, the *Tambov*, was very clean and comfortable, and the third day out landed us in Nagasaki.

The captain of the steamer, Pouaré, was of French descent; his grandfather, who was captured during Napoleon's campaign of 1812, settled in Russia. The captain's brother was the celebrated cartoonist, who worked for the Paris *Figaro* under the name of Caran d'Ache—*karandash* being the Russian word for pencil. From Nagasaki I made my way to Tokio. Sir Ernest Satow—a remarkably able man—was then our Minister to Japan, and was most kind. His knowledge of the language was such that he was, from time to time, called upon by native pundits to elucidate problems in their language, which they could not unravel with certainty themselves. It is said that it requires seven years for a student of Chinese to acquire a fair mastery of that perplexing tongue, and Japanese is, I believe, even more difficult.

What a change it was from winter in Siberia to spring in Japan! The contrast was the more marked because of the radically different temperaments of the two peoples, which was, of course, obvious. Sir Ernest had no military attaché at the time of my visit, and would have liked me to spend a few weeks in the country, so as to give him my opinion about the Mikado's troops, but this was impossible, as it was high time for me to return to Europe.

The Minister, however, arranged for me to pay a visit to the Deputy-Chief of the General Staff, who had planned

the war with China a short time previously. The titular chief was a prince of the Imperial House, something of a figurehead, it was said. A visit to the barracks of the 1st and 2nd Guards infantry regiments was interesting. It was odd that junior officers should continually interrupt their brigadier, who was present, and, if one had to judge by externals alone, Russia was likely to prove a very different foe from unmilitary China. No opinion worth having could be formed on such a casual occasion.

One thing, however, struck me, namely, the Japanese characteristic of asking questions while avoiding answering one's own. This was borne in upon me years afterwards when in the North China command: questions were frequently put to me about the actual strength of our troops, although—as I pointed out once to the Japanese commander—a return of our numbers was sent to him weekly, signed by me. No doubt he wanted to see if he could catch me out in some discrepancy. If I enquired about, say, the probable number of Japanese reservists in China, the answer might be that there were practically none, although there were, as a fact, a considerable number.

All countries practise this sort of thing: a Minister in Parliament is asked a definite question, but his skilful reply does not answer it. Four or five years ago a friend of mine, an exporter on a large scale, sent a consignment of Japanese lead pencils to Australia, as the samples had appeared to be excellent. It was, however, soon discovered by the purchasers that the pencils only had lead at the ends, and remonstrances with the makers elicited the reply that they were all up to sample, as indeed proved to be the case! The manufacturers saw nothing to warrant a charge of sharp practice: the samples could have been cut in two. *Caveat emptor.*

On the voyage from Yokohama to Vancouver we had six hundred Chinese emigrants on board the *Empress of China*, and smallpox broke out among them. This necessitated, according to Canadian law, the vaccination of all the passengers, and the vaccine, being of a very special Japanese brand, was guaranteed to "take" virulently on anybody. It had no effect whatever upon me,

so the operation was repeated with the same result. On arriving at our destination the health officer—a self-satisfied young gentleman, who was said to have been appointed owing to his having a political pull—put us all in for a fortnight's quarantine. This raised an uproar, but he stood firm for some days, and apparently wished to aggravate the saloon passengers, because it was known that he would not dare to detain the ship herself for so long a period. The Canadian Pacific Railroad, said then to be the real government of Canada, had only three mail steamers on the Yokohama route, and a fortnight's detention would have upset the schedule.

The end of it was that he released everybody except myself. This was very vexatious, as I had emerged unscathed from Siberia. It was also my wish to get home quickly—my scurvy symptoms were very painful—so I showed the autocrat, Dr. Watt, a telegram to be sent to the Governor-General. It was not likely to have had any useful result, but it alarmed him, so I was also set free. We had our "Antipodes Day" of forty-eight hours—as we were heading east—on April 21st, when we crossed the 180th degree of longitude east of Greenwich; this gave us two Wednesdays in the same week.

A comfortable and interesting journey to New York by way of Montreal enabled me to catch the Cunard steamer *Etruria* in May for Liverpool. Baggage for the United States was examined at Montreal, and the American Customs Department had then, as to-day, the reputation of being the most difficult in the world. So far as I was concerned, however, it is only just to say that no formalities of this nature could have been more pleasant; in fact, none of my baggage was even opened.

The engineering difficulties in the Rocky Mountains section of the Canadian railway—which had been so triumphantly overcome—were truly amazing when compared with those on the Siberian route; it gave one a glow of patriotic pride to feel that British subjects had vanquished them. It was during that journey that I met the tenderloin steak, extraordinarily succulent, for the first time; it is surprising that one cannot get the

same thing on this side of the ocean, yet a bullock is a bullock everywhere ; it all depends on the cutting up.

On arrival in London it was delightful to learn that the Queen had issued orders for me to be attached to the suite of the Grand Duke Serge of Russia and the Grand Duchess Elisabeth Feodorovna, who were to represent Russia at the forthcoming celebrations in honour of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee. Before these commenced, however, it was necessary for me to pay a flying visit to St. Petersburg and report to Sir Nicholas O'Connor. He had been, unfortunately, very ill, having been treated for, I think, bronchitis at first, whereas he was suffering from pleurisy. On one occasion I had sent him a not very cryptic telegram from Siberia, thinking it would be read between the lines. Probably he would have done this but for his illness ; however, some brilliant secretary thought I had gone mad, and telegraphed to enquire whether this was the case—another instance of two people looking at the same thing from a different angle !

The Diamond Jubilee festivities were indeed wonderful, the more so as the English Court had not been in the habit, for many years, of entertaining on a great scale. Fortune again favoured me, for Lord Churchill—now the Chairman of the Great Western Railway—was also attached to the Russian Imperial Highnesses ; he, like his charming wife—a sister of Lord Lonsdale—was most kind, and no trouble was too great for him. My wife and I are deeply indebted to both of them for many subsequent acts of kindness.

One could not find a more sympathetic nature, or one more thoughtful for others than the Grand Duchess Elisabeth, sister of the Empress, who was foully murdered after years spent in good works. It was a real pleasure to serve her, and the Russian suite in attendance was, as one would surmise, delightful. The Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess were to be lodged at Buckingham Palace, and intended to arrive somewhat earlier than the date of the official invitation. On informing the housekeeper of their wish she was considerably upset because, she told me, preparations could not be made in time ; it seemed that



there was for one thing a scarcity of sheets, the supply being very limited, so that, in the end, Their Imperial Highnesses went to the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh (Saxe-Coburg and Gotha) at Clarence House, until the official date of their visit. The accommodation for humbler mortals in the Palace, who had much writing to do and numerous arrangements to make, was not convenient; my room had no table, so that the chest of drawers had to serve as one.

Digressing for a moment it may be mentioned that, about a quarter of a century later, there was a great Labour meeting at the Albert Hall, where a very extreme leader suggested that, on the way home, the railings of the Palace should be marked "To Let." It was a fact that many families were living in the most dreadful poverty not far away, and, addressing a meeting soon afterwards, I said that to house them in the Palace would not be a wise course.

"Do you not think," asked a questioner, "that these wretched people ought to be lodged there in default of any other place?"

He was certainly not desirous of bloodshed, and my reply was that the housing question is one of such magnitude that it can only be solved nationally; others quite as badly off, in—say—Leeds, would feel hurt if Buckingham Palace were to be reserved for a very limited number of Londoners. Possibly two or three hundred souls might be crammed into the building, but "even with a small number of ordinary guests it is a very uncomfortable house." This remark brought forth an interrupter, who enquired what ground there was for my assertion. "Because I have stayed there."

We were a very large party in the Household room, where the Master of the Household, Lord Edward Pelham-Clinton, presided. As soon as dinner was over on the first night of our stay, some of the Russian suite wished to smoke, so I asked him if this was permitted. It appeared that it was absolutely forbidden, but, on my explaining that it would be a dreadful deprivation for some of the guests, he nobly and very valiantly took it upon himself

to rescind the order pending Her Majesty's commands. The Queen was still at Windsor, but, on hearing of the predicament, full license was granted immediately. At the Coronation of King George, in 1911, the Grand Duke Boris Vladimirovich, representing the Emperor of Russia, lighted a cigarette in the corridor, leading from the ball-room, when everybody was going home. An attendant dashed at him, but accepted the situation on learning who the culprit was.

This was a trifle, but the conduct of the Crown Prince of Germany, during a ball at Grosvenor House on the same occasion, was very different. He was sprawling on a sofa, smoking, and I knew what his father would not only have said but have done to the young man had His Majesty espied him.

It was a soul-stirring spectacle for those of us, who rode in the Royal Procession through London on June 22nd, 1897, to see and hear the absolutely boundless enthusiasm of Her Majesty's loyal subjects, and the weather was glorious. An amusing incident may be mentioned: the deputation of officers belonging to Her Majesty's 1st Prussian Dragoons of the Guard was nearer to the Queen's carriage than myself, and some wag in the crowd called out to enquire where the nearest telegraph office was, referring, of course, to the German Emperor's cablegram to President Krüger. One of the officers was, however, quite equal to the occasion, and replied at once: "Close by, just round the corner." This put everybody in good humour, and turned the laugh against the questioner.

A London crowd is very humorous if taken in the right spirit. My wife and I were commanded to the first of the evening Courts in King Edward's reign, and I was feeling very chilly, suffering from a horrible cold in the head. There was a block in the Mall, and, presently, I closed my window. Thereupon a very pretty girl in the crowd called out: "Oh, look at the pore general; he's crying because he can't get in." We roared with laughter, and, letting down the window, had quite a pleasant talk with the fair damsel.

It happened that the Chinese special ambassador and

the Papal Envoy were in the same carriage in the Queen's Procession, and, on the same evening, the story was current that each had complained to the Lord Chamberlain about being asked to drive in such company ! I had travelled with the Celestial representative from Yokohama to Vancouver, and he consulted me when we were put in quarantine. He was well aware of his extra-territorial privileges as ambassador, and wanted to know whether the commander of the steamer, Captain Archibald, was likely to give him a boat to the mainland. That, I answered, was beyond his powers, but nobody would interfere with His Excellency if he could hire one ; his attempts, however, failed. He was a very interesting man ; for some reason or another he was, I believe, executed soon after his return to China.

There was, unfortunately, trouble about the Royal Progress through London. The supply of Court and other carriages and horses was limited : there were seventeen in all, including Her Majesty's, most of them being drawn by two horses instead of four. Each carriage—except one—was packed to the brim ; two, indeed, carried five passengers. The exception was the landau conveying Lady Suffield, and Lord Colville of Culross, who belonged to the Household of the Princess of Wales ; Count Seckendorff, Chamberlain to the Empress Frederick, occupied the third seat, while the fourth was vacant.

Owing to the large number of guests it had been arranged that those members of royal suites, for whom there was no carriage accommodation, should go on ahead to St. Paul's Cathedral, where an outdoor service was to be held. When it was nearly time for these personages to start, I happened to look in on a very *grande dame*, a friend from abroad, and found her in tears. On enquiring the reason it appeared that it was because she was not to drive in the Procession, and she regarded this as an affront to her royal mistress. The insult was accentuated by the fact that a mere man, Count Seckendorff, had been allotted a carriage seat, and my friend was determined to show what she thought of the arrangement by not going at all.

I explained that the List of Precedence had been drawn

up by the Queen herself, who had actually put the name of the Empress Frederick alongside her own as co-equal with Her Majesty. The Empress had a suite of six ladies and gentlemen, of whom only one other, Princess Hatzfeldt-Trachenberg, was in the Royal Procession. My friend's royal mistress was comparatively low down in the list, and, if she had been specially favoured, other Personages would have complained. My arguments were of no avail: I even invented one to the effect that the Queen would be much annoyed on hearing—which she never would do—that her own orders had been criticised, but nothing would alter the decision of the disconsolate lady, who remained in her somewhat dreary room. Having some acquaintance with her mistress I expressed my sympathy and regret afterwards about the incident, but she only laughed and said: "It was very silly of her to be so foolish!"

On the day following the Royal Procession I happened to witness the arrival at the Palace of the Speaker of the House of Commons, who was accompanied by some five hundred members of that assembly. The crush at the foot of the great staircase was terrific, the space being far too small, but matters were rendered worse by the jostling which began among our legislators. Some of them seemed to think they would not catch the royal eye unless they were well to the front.

They were penned in the entrance hall until the peers should return from their reception, and it was, indeed, very difficult for Mr. Speaker Gully, who was of fine physique and had stout fighting blood in his veins, to work his way to the foot of the staircase; he managed this, however, somehow or another, just as the signal to ascend was given. Thereupon the Commons flung themselves forward—some intentionally, some because they were literally swept off their feet—and surged upstairs; the Speaker, who was very quick from the tapes, just managed to win by the shortest of short heads on arriving at the Presence Chamber.

A State performance at the Royal Italian Opera was scheduled for the same evening at Covent Garden, and it must be confessed that the organising abilities of the English



Court did not show to advantage as regards the arrangements for some of the foreign guests. The Russian suite of the Grand Duke Serge and his wife consisted of six persons: Prince and Princess Yousoupov, Countess Olsouviev, Princess Lobanov (niece of the Minister for Foreign Affairs), and a couple of officers, but only two tickets were allotted for these important guests.

To make matters worse it was only about a year previously that some Russians had been excluded from places in the Cathedral of the Assumption at Moscow in order to make more room for foreigners. Remonstrances here were of no avail; one was met by the reply: "It is the Queen's command." Time was very short, and the Russian suite was naturally dreadfully hurt—so were others—and, unless all were invited, none of my party would attend the opera.

It occurred to me to lay the matter before the Prince of Wales. His Royal Highness was—let us say—very much upset, and gave me two tickets, one from himself and one from the Duke of York, our present gracious Sovereign. Lord Churchill managed somehow—few but he could have done it—to get the other two. Being on duty I could not transfer mine. Before this happy settlement had been arranged another little trouble had occurred, caused by the more rigid etiquette of foreigners.

The Marquis of Lincolnshire (then Lord Carrington) was the Lord Great Chamberlain, and, unlike Lord Lathom—the Lord Chamberlain—he had no official duties in connection with the Diamond Jubilee festivities. Being a very kind-hearted gentleman, and anxious to do what was possible for the neglected guests, he invited the Russians to dine and spend the evening at his house. All this was a matter of hours before the opera, and he had not had an opportunity of being presented to the Russian ladies. They did not quite appreciate his intention, or else they felt too strongly the slight which had been put upon them. When the invitation was conveyed to them Princess Yousoupov asked: "*Mais qui est donc ce Lord Carrington ?*"

The system in vogue at great continental Courts like

St. Petersburg was quite different to that in England: on State occasions the whole house would be filled by invited guests only, and the Sovereigns were far wealthier. Covent Garden on June 23rd was, nevertheless, a magnificent spectacle; we could more than hold our own as regards the beauty of our women, while nowhere in Europe, so far as is known to me, were jewels displayed to such advantage as here. Many far larger stones can be seen abroad—or could—but, if ours are, on the whole, somewhat smaller, they sparkle in a way not seen anywhere else.

Various other entertainments filled up the crowded days: the most interesting among them was the naval review at Portsmouth, and, amidst that huge fleet, the chief object of attraction was, to my mind, Mr. Parsons' little turbine steamer; it was evidently destined to inaugurate a new era in naval strategy and tactics, notwithstanding the obvious limitations of the first parent. Yet who in that vast concourse dreamed that, in the near future, flying would be an everyday affair, while an isolated dweller in the country would be able, by expending a few shillings, to listen at his ease, free gratis, to music and singing of the highest class provided by artists at places hundreds, perhaps thousands, of miles distant from the listener's chair?

The question of tipping domestic servants and others is known to all of us; the practice is often said to be carried out on a larger scale on the Continent than in England, but it all depends. A guest—not blessed with much money—told me once, before the Great War, that he was one of a shooting party at the house of a very wealthy South African magnate, and offered the head keeper £2. He was, however, given plainly to understand that the minimum expected was five sovereigns. On the other hand, when staying with that charming host, the late Lord Warwick, for a very big shoot, we were told that nobody was expected to give anything, but, should one desire to make a present, it was on no account to exceed 10s. daily; he was a *grand seigneur*.

It was the custom for any money gifts, which might be dispensed by the Queen's guests, to be handed over to an

official of the Household; they were then pooled and divided, according to a definite scale, among the Palace staff, so that everybody eligible received a share. Russians were the most generous, indeed lavish, of all in this respect, but, when the Duke of Connaught was at the Coronation in Moscow, his gift was so large that some of the Imperial Court officials commented on it to me. When the Diamond Jubilee festivities were at an end, and the guests had departed, I happened to tell the Prince of Wales that the Grand Duke Serge's donation, extremely handsome as it was, had been eclipsed by the Duke of Connaught's, whereupon he replied that he objected very strongly indeed to the guests of royalty giving anything at all, and wished he could put a stop to the habit.

The Prince of Wales was always full of consideration for others. When staying at Balmoral I was asked if I would play Bridge—this was before the days of Auction—and, on saying frankly that I could not afford it, I was told that one of the players would “carry” me. So I had a gamble with penny points, and had a remarkably lucky evening. When it came to settling up I noticed that the games had been for sixpenny points only, so I explained to the King that I had thought they would be much higher: “In my own house never, except by special arrangement; many people are very fond of the game, but cannot afford, or do not wish, to play higher.”

The Diamond Jubilee celebrations did not end my banqueting and social season of 1897: the German Emperor and Empress were to arrive at St. Petersburg in the early days of August, and they were to be followed by the French President, Félix Faure. Before leaving England for my post, however, there occurred an incident which threw a very vivid light on the official position of the Prince of Wales at that time. At a State Ball at Buckingham Palace, in July, I happened to be standing behind some other people in the corridor leading from the ball-room to the supper-room, as the Royal Procession, headed by the Prince—who represented the Queen—advanced. By accident he looked in my direction, and stopped the procession for a moment; a very fat and very wealthy

lady, blazing with diamonds, was just in front of me, and, not unnaturally, thought the compliment was meant for her, but she did not catch the royal eye.

His Royal Highness said to me : " We have not seen each other for some time ; come to-morrow morning," and then passed on. When I presented myself the next day he wished to hear more particularly about my travels in Siberia, and one other subject, so I said that he would, perhaps, like to read my reports at his leisure. This, he replied, would suit him admirably, as he could study them on board his yacht during the forthcoming Cowes week. The originals were in the Foreign Office, and, the drafts being in St. Petersburg, we agreed that, as there would not be time for me to make fresh copies before Goodwood, I should ask the Foreign Office to lend him the originals.

Thereupon I wrote to Sir Thomas Sanderson, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, explaining the situation. This elicited a prompt answer, telling me that they had been sent by Lord Salisbury, who did not object to the Prince of Wales seeing them, but he " does not think they should have been mentioned to H.R.H. without permission, and wishes me to ask you for an explanation."

I replied that the Prince himself had questioned me about their subject-matter, as he knew I must have written officially about it. Also, as he might be called upon to ascend the throne at any moment, and was likewise a Field-Marshal in the Army, it would have seemed very presumptuous, I thought, on my part to have refused to discuss the matter. Lord Salisbury and Sanderson were both pacified, and the latter wrote me a very pleasant note in reply. It does appear amazing to the ordinary citizen that one in the position of heir to the throne should have been kept officially in the dark until the last possible moment. As a matter of fact, the Prince of Wales, in addition to his own great gifts, was served by a remarkably efficient Staff, so that little or nothing of importance escaped him, but the system was utterly wrong and, indeed, dangerous.

Very different was his procedure when he became King Edward VII : he insisted that his heir should be kept fully informed on all matters of interest. But, even



then, attempts were made sometimes to evade this order. When my report on the Russo-Japanese War was ready for issue—it was confidential then—I mentioned to General Grierson, the Director of Military Operations, that a copy was required for the Prince of Wales, now our gracious Sovereign, but he replied that the work was of too secret a nature. On pointing out that the King desired his heir to be acquainted with anything important, Grierson said : “ When he becomes King he shall have a copy ! ” This incident was on all fours with that of 1897.

The official argument was strange, especially in 1905, for this Manchurian report was issued on a liberal scale to the Army, and was therefore available to a large number of officers. A copy was, in the end, sent to the Prince of Wales by order of a superior authority. A long official career is apt, sometimes, to arouse super-caution ; possibly Lord Salisbury would never have troubled his head about the Foreign Office papers if the case had been presented to him in a different manner ; he would, indeed, never have heard of it if the permanent official, trained in a very rigid school, had not brought it to his notice.

St. Petersburg was on tiptoe with excitement about the approaching visits of the German Emperor and the President of the French Republic. What intrigued Russian society most was the ceremonial to be observed, for Russia was very particular in some respects. After the Coronation at Moscow an enterprising British firm conceived the idea of manufacturing and selling vast numbers of cheap tea trays, on each of which was depicted a portrait of the Emperor Nicholas. In fact a large quantity had already been made, but they could not be put on sale in Russia without the permission of the authorities. They turned the scheme down at once, explaining that it would be derogatory to the Imperial dignity for cups and plates to be placed on His Majesty's face.

In some ways custom had changed : in a despatch of October 13th, 1896, I mentioned the fact that, whereas during the earlier days of the Franco-Russian *Entente* it was forbidden to have the *Marseillaise* played at a private banquet, the French national anthem was then

being performed by the Imperial orchestra at the Imperial Opera House in the capital. There was therefore plenty of scope for speculation, and, if one really knows a foreign country, it is possible sometimes to extract something useful for the future from official junketings and speeches.

The German Emperor and Empress were the first to arrive on August 7th, and, as the soldiers were the chief attraction for the Imperial visitor, the military attachés travelled with him to the camp at Krasnoe Selo on the following day for a couple of nights. A very special compliment was paid to William II by the inclusion, in one of the band programmes, of his own composition, the *Sang an Ægir*. The arrangements for the two visits must have caused many searchings of heart and head, for the eyes of the whole world were focussed upon them. On the whole the honours were fairly equally divided between the two important guests, although the ceremonial differed on each occasion.

The camp comprised the normal number of units, all belonging to the comparatively small St. Petersburg military district, namely, sixty-five battalions, fifty-seven squadrons, a couple of hundred field guns, some engineers and other services. At the review for the German Emperor his host, attended by the suites and military attachés, inspected the lines of troops in company with William II, while both Empresses drove round them at the same time. At the next review the President was unaccustomed to riding, and the Emperor of Russia did not wish his Consort to accompany M. Faure in a carriage, so the difficulty was solved by dispensing altogether with the usual inspection before the march past. Nicholas II drove on to the ground with the President on his right hand, while the Empress arrived in another carriage; the guest was then conducted by his host to the Imperial marquee in rear of the saluting point, and was left with the Empress, while the Emperor mounted his charger. So far the balance was in favour of Germany, as was also the next point: when the German Emperor was on parade, Nicholas II headed his own forces and saluted his visitor,

in marching past, in the most graceful manner possible, but he did not do this for the President.

M. Faure stood on the left of the Empress, who remained standing all the time—about two hours—that the troops were defiling in front of the Emperor, the visitor removing his hat as each regiment reached the saluting base ; evening clothes are not well adapted for a ceremony of this kind, but the President came through the ordeal uncommonly well.

Just three years afterwards—in September 1900—the German Empress was talking to me, in the early hours of the morning, at a crowded reception in the Palace at Stettin ; we had all, including Her Majesty, been on our feet for some four or five hours, and I remarked that she must be very tired. “ Well, yes, I am ; you see, there are so many people here, who wish to be presented and whom I have not met before, and, if I were to sit down, I would feel so awkward about parting from anybody when I want to pass on to somebody else ; if I am standing up it is so much easier.”

The advantage at Krasnoe Selo was, so far, in favour of Germany, but this was at least fully compensated by the military balloon on parade—a captive one—for on it were painted in gigantic letters, “ *Vive la France*,” whereas, for William II, it bore no distinctive inscription.

A great luncheon was the sequel to both reviews : at the one attended by the German Emperor no toast was proposed, whereas, when the President was the guest of honour, Nicholas II drank to his health, very briefly in accordance with his invariable custom. The reply of M. Faure was more lengthy. The menu cards for the German Emperor were of the pattern usually employed, but, for the President’s visit, they were veritable works of art.

France, then, had scored on the whole, but to counter-balance her gain, the principal Russian officer, attached to the person of William II, was an Aide-de-camp-General of the Emperor Nicholas, while, in M. Faure’s case, he was a general officer, it is true, but was not a member of His Imperial Majesty’s suite, although some of his sub-

ordinates did belong to it. This was a question of Russian etiquette : the senior of a batch of officers, attached to anybody not of royal birth, could not be a member of the Russian Emperor's personal entourage, and Nicholas II did not desire to break this rule.

This made the score on both sides fairly equal, but the French won, as we may say, by a short head, because the camp had been decorated profusely for the President, and stands had been erected for guests of the Court and the paying public.

M. Faure's entertainment by the Imperial couple did not, of course, end at Krasnoe Selo. He laid the foundation-stone of a permanent bridge across the Neva, just outside the British Embassy ; his Foreign Minister, M. Hanotaux, was very busy, and spoke to me in the most admiring way about my own country ; he was a sharp fellow and looked it. The principal item, however, was the Emperor's speech at a banquet : the French had been desperately anxious for His Majesty to speak of France as being not merely a friend but an ally. Nicholas had, at first, hesitated about conceding this point ; the agreement with the great Republic was regarded as being essential for Russian interests, but, as some prominent Russians told me, a good many people thought that an alliance between the two countries was an " obscene " match ; the fact was that the governing class in France was despised for its personal characteristics. When the Emperor made his speech, however, he put aside his scruples and spoke of France as a country "*amie et alliée*."

One or two more personal matters obtruded themselves during the two visits : they centred round His Imperial Highness Prince Louis Napoleon, the Napoleonic claimant. He was an officer in the Russian Army and, at the time, commanded a Guards regiment, the Empress's Lancers. William II had been anxious to meet him, but the prince managed to evade him at first. His Majesty, however, determined not to be baulked, got hold of him one day on parade when there was no escape ! Some of us were close to the Imperial pair, and the interview did not



appear to be a merry one, while at the luncheon which followed the morning's work Prince Louis was not present.

He ran no risk of meeting the President on parade, as the latter was not on horseback, and he attended the luncheon after the review. M. Faure was naturally desirous, under the very special circumstances, of making his acquaintance, short of going up to the prince himself, and some *ballons d'essai* were let loose in consequence. They all failed in their purpose, and, at last, an officer told Prince Louis that his own military chief, the Grand Duke Vladimir, wished him to meet the President. Being sceptical about this he went and enquired from the Grand Duke if such was the case, which, it then appeared, it was not !

The President, it was said, also wished to confer the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour on the great Napoleon's descendant, but His Imperial Highness claimed to have had this decoration when still in the cradle, although he did not wear it.

A dreadful-looking French deputy had pursued the President to St. Petersburg, whether from political or from social motives, or both, was not known. Wearing his tricolour sash he was present at luncheon, having somehow managed—it was said by means of parliamentary threats—to procure an invitation. I noticed that my French colleague and friend, Moulin, declined to sit next to the legislator, for he left a chair vacant between them. The visitor was also somewhat of a collector, and collectors are sometimes accused of having no scruples ; the Frenchman, at any rate, laid hands on all the menu cards which he could manage to reach. One was provided for each guest, so he made an uncommonly good haul, the Russians, from whom he took them, being too polite to object. We were expected to take our own as a souvenir.

The greatest pains had thus been taken by Nicholas II and all concerned to make the two visits pass off successfully, and, in spite of some minor incidents, such as those just recorded, the object had been attained. England was, at the time, again in bad odour from a political standpoint ; various circumstances, none of them of

pressing importance, had combined to bring this about ; nevertheless, a mark of attention was paid to her which was as pleasant as it was unexpected. It was due to the fortuitous arrival of a party of British visitors.

The late Lady Shaftesbury, accompanied by some equally attractive friends, of whom General Lord William Seymour was one, had arrived at St. Petersburg in a yacht just at the time of the President's visit. Seymour was naturally desirous of seeing something of the Russian Army, and it occurred to me, knowing that the Russians never, so far as my experience went, mixed up politics and private friendship, that it would be a master-stroke to get Seymour invited not only to the review for the President, but to the Imperial luncheon afterwards. The audacious plan was more than successful, because he was placed at the Imperial table, not far from the Emperor and Empress, to whom he was presented after the meal was over ; being a very charming as well as a very handsome man, he created a most favourable impression, and I felt that my country could congratulate herself accordingly.

The year 1897 came to an end without anything else happening which is worthy of record, except that more and more attention was being paid to affairs in the Far East. Japan was being taken more seriously, and the prospect of war with her, in the not distant future, was even considered probable. During my tour in Siberia it had been common talk that Russia's next move would soon be in the direction of the Liao-Tung peninsula, which would certainly increase the tension not only with Japan but with this country as well. This opinion was justified shortly afterwards.

## CHAPTER XIII

RUMBLINGS of the coming storm were heard from time to time until it burst early in 1898 by Russia seizing Port Arthur, from which she had only recently ousted Japan. It was my good fortune to be still in St. Petersburg when matters came to a head ; I think that I could have been transferred previously to Berlin, but Grierson wrote to say he believed he would get that appointment if I held aloof, and, besides, Russia suited me so excellently that it would have been a wrench to leave all my kind friends there.

As Mr. Gladstone and Emerson remarked, able men change their opinions occasionally : less than five years afterwards, when I was temporarily at Berlin and wished to remain there instead of returning to the War Office, Grierson, who, when he first went to the German capital, could see nothing wrong in anything German, wrote to me that he had seen “ enough of Germans to last me all my life ! ” He had been with von Waldersee during the Boxer troubles in North China, and, before that, Teutonic sentiment about the Boer War had influenced his former views, with the result that, thereafter, everything the Germans did was wrong, and their empire would be an easy prey for Britain and France combined.

The Emperor, William II, had manœuvred matters skilfully in order to get von Waldersee appointed to command the Allies ; there was, however, bound to be friction somewhere. In fact I had a very unpleasant experience in connection therewith : the German Emperor and Empress were present at a reception in Stettin, in September 1900, when a French officer, Colonel Silvestre—he was, I think, Chief of the President’s Military Household—came up to me and began discussing von Waldersee’s

appointment. A number of the Imperial entourage could hear what passed between us, and one question made me shiver : “ *Mais qui est donc ce Monsieur Waldersee ?* ” (Whoever is this Mr. Waldersee ?) No duels, however, took place, somewhat to my surprise.

At the commencement of 1898 there was a suggestion in some quarters that my term should be extended for another year. The Prince of Wales was gracious enough to tell Sir Arthur Ellis to write to me that “ every effort should be made to give you an extra year, having done so admirably well. The Prince will himself be glad to assist in any way in his power to get this effected.” As His Royal Highness had exceptional opportunities of hearing about things in Russia this was indeed a very great compliment ; it is mentioned because the ambassador did not, as I learned shortly afterwards, see eye to eye with him, nor with General Sir John Ardagh, who had succeeded Sir Edward Chapman as Chief of the Intelligence Division. Sir John had told me to write him a letter, which he could show to higher authority, about an extension, but it all came to nothing. O’Conor did not wish it, and nobody could object to his expression of opinion ; everybody else, in the Foreign Office and War Office, was, however, extremely nice to me about the matter, while the ambassador naturally consulted his own feelings ; most people do.

Count Muraviev had become Minister for Foreign Affairs ; he was a great, rough man of no particular ability. Some of the other Ministers were self-made men, and had things pretty well their own way, because the great Russian families seldom cared to take part in the government of the country, nor, indeed, owing to their upbringing, were they well qualified to do so. It was this fact which led me to write, in February 1898, that, with increasing public pressure, “ the whole existing system will be swept away in a perfect torrent of blood.” The unfortunate Emperor was in the hands of his Ministers, who often had their own interests to serve.

The Far Eastern question was tending more and more towards a crisis when, at the end of January, the Russian



Press, under orders from Muraviev, suddenly became very friendly as regarded England: this pleasant state of affairs lasted only for two days, and then it was as virulent as ever, obviously with ministerial approval. Relations between the two countries were becoming strained, and the situation was not improved by the ambassador giving a large dinner-party, followed by a dance in the early days of February: some of the Grand Dukes refused to come, not unnaturally, as they were invited by telephone; I had to invite one of them in this manner, about four o'clock on the day, to come in after dinner; he declined. There were two pieces of bad luck: a footman upset some wine over the neck and dress of the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna, wife of the Grand Duke Vladimir, but she managed—how I cannot say—to knock a bottle of ink over poor Lady O'Connor's beautiful skirt later on in the evening.

In the early days of March 1898, I wrote that "if the year ends without a war somewhere I shall be almost surprised. Stocks and shares down to rubbish prices, accentuated by the publication of an *Ukaz* directing an extra sum of £9,000,000 sterling to be spent on the Russian navy. Certainly political matters are in a highly disturbed state, more so than I ever remember in my time here."

Things came to a head about Port Arthur; it made probably no difference that the ambassador had discredited my statement of a couple of years previously that Russia meant to have Port Arthur. As a last resort O'Connor was instructed to secure a pledge that she would not fortify it, but he found Muraviev shifty and evasive, until finally the question was one for the British and Russian Governments to solve, if a peaceful solution were still possible, which was decidedly doubtful. O'Connor said one day, after returning from an interview with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, that he would have him "branded as a liar in the House of Commons." This would not have been a difficult task!

It had been, and was still, my firm conviction that Russia meant to hold and fortify Port Arthur, and, while

she would much prefer to do this without a war, once she had taken any active step in this direction, she would fight us or Japan, or both combined, before surrendering. O'Connor, unlike other ambassadors under whom I have served, preferred that I should be kept in the dark regarding diplomatic affairs, although it was difficult, especially in a country like Russia, always to separate them from military matters. In fact when we leased Wei-Hai-Wei to offset our discomfiture over Port Arthur, I would have known nothing about the negotiations if Russians, equally as well informed as our side was, had not told me that the *coup* was coming off. When it did materialise the ambassador asked me whether it was not a smart stroke of British diplomacy and a surprise to me. But, as I told His Excellency, the Russians had kept me informed—they had their information from Pekin—and it did not occur to me to mention it, as he must have been equally well inspired by London.

A few months previously, in September 1897, when Lord Wolseley was Commander-in-Chief and Major-General Coleridge Grove was Military Secretary, the Selection Board promoted me to the substantive rank of lieutenant-colonel in the army, which, of course, was most gratifying. I was still about half-way down the list of majors in the Royal Artillery, with the prospect of serving several more years in that grade after relinquishing my temporary rank on leaving Russia. This took me off the artillery list altogether, leaving me nothing but staff work as possible employment; some of my friends thought I was rash, but I did not care much about returning to ordinary garrison duty after my interesting experiences, and my promotion was, at any rate, a distinct mark of satisfaction on the part of my military superiors, which I always remember with gratitude, from such men especially. Time, however, made the pendulum swing in the other direction: instead of being promoted to major-general I was relegated to the military rubbish heap in Army Council days. Each member told Sir Arthur Davidson that he, personally, had wished to promote such an excellent officer, but all the others had opposed him!

King Edward had told Davidson to send an "angry" letter to the War Office, and he wrote to me, after His Majesty's death, that I had been "treated very badly." Thus do opinions differ, but one must take the rough with the smooth, and a good deal of the latter has come my way. Knowledge of foreigners and their languages was sometimes a bar in itself. Sir Charles Douglas, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, was inclined to think so; my name was submitted to him, in 1914, for employment with the Serbian Army, but he struck it out at once.

My time in Russia was due to expire on April 14th, 1898, and, in the ordinary course, I would have had farewell audiences of the Emperor and Empress just before my departure, but it was hinted to me that His Majesty would like to expedite the interview. The Port Arthur question had reached a highly critical stage: pull devil pull baker about fortifications or no fortifications. If the latter our Government was prepared to admit the occupation, but not otherwise.

The Emperor did not really know Sir Nicholas O'Connor: he had, of course, met him on a few official occasions, but their acquaintanceship was actually very slight. In fact His Majesty was not in the habit of meeting any ambassador except on formal occasions, although Their Excellencies had the right, as personal representatives of their respective Chiefs of State, to ask for an audience. It has been mentioned already that diplomatists were not, as a body, viewed favourably at either of the two great military Courts, St. Petersburg or Berlin, while some military attachés had fairly frequent opportunities of seeing both rulers and of bringing up any subject which it was desired to discuss.

The Emperor Nicholas received me on March 25th, 1898, by which time it was really a problem for the two Governments to decide as to which of them should give way over the fortifications, the negotiations in St. Petersburg having reached a deadlock. Among my other interviews there had been one, after my return from Siberia, when His Majesty made no secret of Russia's intended expansion southward in the Far East in the course of

time. During this particular farewell audience he said—speaking in English, which he knew perfectly—that if Russia, having got Port Arthur, were not to fortify the harbour, it “would be like a man building a house without a door, so that burglars could enter.”

The interview lasted a considerable time ; a number of other points were touched upon, all of much less importance than the Far Eastern one. It was, however, very interesting to hear from His Majesty, in view of the Franco-Russian alliance, that we would do well to be on the alert in Nigeria, as France had far-reaching projects in that region. I wondered what the French Ambassador, Count de Montebello, would have reported had he been aware of this very friendly communication ! Mentioning the matter soon afterwards to Sir Evelyn Wood, the Adjutant-General, that distinguished officer said we had sufficient force on the spot if need should arise.

On taking leave of the Emperor he was gracious enough to remark that he was “very sorry” that my departure was imminent and “so are others.” The Empress then received me : Her Majesty was not in good spirits, as she had so many ties with England, of which she was very fond, which conflicted with her duty and position as reigning Empress ; she felt the strain very much. Both Sovereigns were good enough to express the hope that we might meet again before long : little did any of us three think that our subsequent interviews would take place in times of stupendous difficulty for Russia, culminating in disasters, private and public, of the most horrible nature.

Immediately after my departure from the Palace my first and paramount duty was, of course, to report to Sir Nicholas O’Conor. He had been annoyed when he learned of my summons to an audience, because it had not been arranged officially through His Excellency ; it will have been seen that the departure from precedent was not my fault, and the result would have been the same whatever method had been adopted to bring about the interview : the sooner it took place the better.

My report of what had passed about Port Arthur was, of course, an exact repetition of what the Emperor had



said to me, but the ambassador brushed this aside with the remark :

“ The Emperor, whatever he may say, is bound by the views of his Government.”

“ Sir,” was my obvious answer, “ in Russia the Emperor is, when he chooses, his own Government.”

O’Conor did not accept this view, but, as His Majesty was in entire accord with his Ministers concerned, the result was certain. Unless we should give way about the fortifications, Russia, much as she preferred peace, would fight, and she won the day, our occupation of Wei-Hai-Wei being scarcely an equivalent stroke.

Among my military colleagues at St. Petersburg was Captain Allen, of the United States cavalry, who, knowing a great deal about some European armies, commanded eventually, in Germany, the troops of occupation belonging to his great and wonderful country. A very pleasant comrade, it was a real joy to hear from him, not long ago, that he flourishes still in every respect. He managed his extraordinarily difficult task on the Rhine with remarkable skill, so much so that, in the early part of 1919, a French and a Belgian staff officer of high rank both expressed the grievances of their respective countries to me, namely, that the British, under Lord Plumer, and the Americans, under General Allen, were treating the former enemy much too kindly, even to the extent of providing them with food when they were hungry.

Allen’s men were said to be, if possible, even worse offenders in this respect than our own ; it was, of course, the fact that neither of the two countries concerned had suffered invasion ; Britain had lost men, also some women and children, but, after all, the material damage done to her was quite negligible. It seemed to me, however, after making every allowance for the foreign viewpoint, that it claimed a great deal too much, so I replied that neither we nor the Americans liked kicking a foe when he was down, adding this remark :

“ After all, England lost far more than France, more than a dozen Alsace-Lorraines.”

When the excitement, caused by this startling observa-

tion, had died away, a demand for an explanation was made ; they thought no satisfactory one could be given.

“ Well,” I said, “ we, owing to our stupid mismanagement, lost the United States of America, and, instead of dreaming of revenge, we changed our methods, with the result that we are to-day what all the world knows, a mighty and happy world-wide empire.” This argument was apparently unanswerable ; at any rate the subject dropped, and England was once again in possession of the field.

My regret at leaving Russia was immense ; five years there had been delightful, and, as has been mentioned already, the kindness, and much more than kindness, to say nothing of the extraordinary hospitality, which the Russians had lavished upon me, is a never-fading memory.

## CHAPTER XIV

ON relinquishing my post at St. Petersburg in April 1898, the members of the British Embassy presented me with a most handsome set of silver bowls in view of my approaching marriage to Miss Oakley. Want of means would have made it impossible for us to live in Russia, but better late than never, and her good sense, discretion and criticism have saved me from many a pitfall. Women are, doubtless, far cleverer than men.

It has been mentioned, in an earlier chapter, that, when a very ordinary person like myself managed to scrape into the Staff College, this feat induced larger numbers of artillery officers also to wrestle with the examiners. Similarly I may truthfully claim that the modern military attaché owes me a debt of gratitude for being able to live quite nicely on his pay and allowances. Having always been badly off it was a very hard pull to fulfil the social duties of the post ; in fact this would have been impossible without the generous assistance rendered by the Foreign Office, at St. Petersburg, and by the present Lord Derby and Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson, at Berlin, when they were at the War Office, although both of them were very vigilant guardians of the public purse. At St. Petersburg, in my time, the salary was £800 : the incumbent at Tokio to-day receives three times that sum. When my case was laid before Sir Guy—whose approval was absolutely essential—he recommended it to Lord Stanley (now Lord Derby), the Financial Secretary. I did not know either of those distinguished men, but they saw the justice of my arguments, and very substantial aid was given me. Some time elapsed before salaries were raised permanently, although a naval attaché, a bird of passage, was always much better paid than his military

colleague. Possibly, after my demise, our military attachés will raise a memorial fund to be devoted to some meritorious object !

On returning to England half-pay was my lot, but the outlook was brightened when I found my lifelong friend, Poultney Bigelow, was living in London ; a volume could be written on the extraordinary kindness shown to me by him and his delightful family, commencing at Berlin in 1871.

Sir John Ardagh offered me a post in the Intelligence Division in the summer of 1898 ; I accepted gladly, and it was a real pleasure to serve under him ; very quiet, rather silent, with plenty of dry humour, he had wonderful vision, never properly recognised. I remained there until the outbreak of the war in South Africa, and a couple of items may be mentioned regarding this second term at the War Office.

European interest in China had much increased, the avowed intention being, as usual, the welfare of the Celestial Empire, but the desire for financial gains on a suitably great scale was also a potent factor. The monumental works on China, compiled by the celebrated traveller and geologist, Baron von Richthofen—with whom I became well acquainted later—were being assimilated, for they described, with German thoroughness, the enormous potential mineral wealth of China.

An Italian gentleman, Signor Luzzatti, I think, evolved a grandiose scheme for prospecting there, and, as is not unusual with foreigners, came to London in order to endeavour to raise the cash required for a really well-equipped expedition. He induced some great financiers to come in—on their own terms, of course—and a strong effort was made to give this syndicate a semi-official backing. This part of the scheme was disliked in some quarters, while receiving support in others. Finally, it turned on this : would the War Office lend the explorers a warrant officer of the Royal Engineers ?

The Deputy Adjutant-General of the Royal Engineers vetoed the proposal ; he had nobody who could possibly be spared. It seemed to me that the request had much



in its favour. My chief clerk was a warrant officer, by name Butler ; I had known him as an excellent man for years, and very well fitted for the post, so I told Sir Evelyn Wood that I would lend him provided somebody else took his place. Thereupon the Adjutant-General swept the objectors aside by issuing the desired order, and I had to look for a new man. It was certain that the D.A.G. R.E. would not help, and, besides, it occurred to me to try and obtain an additional officer in place of a warrant officer.

This would require some manœuvring, because the Army estimates for the year could not be exceeded, and they laid down the fixed establishment. There was, however, a way out : an officer might be appointed temporarily. Looking over the confidential reports on officers who had recently passed out of the Staff College, one on Captain W. R. Robertson arrested my attention. He had started in life by enlisting, as all the world knows, in the 16th Lancers, had worked very hard to improve his natural gifts, and, after obtaining a commission, was employed for a time in the Intelligence Division at Army Headquarters in India.

The report on him by the Commandant of the Staff College was very favourable, and I resolved at once to get Robertson, if this could be managed : there was no lack of suitable candidates. It all worked, for once, according to plan, and he joined the War Office staff as a temporary measure. I soon found that he was the very man required, a great worker, and absolutely reliable.

Not long after he had taken up his duties I happened to be on leave, but was in London. One night, after dinner, he came to see me in, naturally, a great state of mind, and said he was to be transferred to Dublin in the capacity of Garrison Instructor, an appointment which, as he had no influence, would lead nowhere ; he might possibly have attained the rank, in years to come, of lieutenant-colonel, and then have been placed on retired pay. His post was to be taken by a very capable and pleasant officer, but, having got Robertson, I wanted to keep him on account of his sterling qualities. The horizon

was, however, black, the change having been practically settled during my absence. I went to the War Office on the following morning, and, using all the artifices of which I was capable, I got the decision rescinded ; I was told that I had apparently made up my mind not to get on with anybody else ! It must be confessed I made myself such a nuisance over the affair that I might well have been ordered to get out of the War Office and remain out.

Then the situation in South Africa was looking gloomier and gloomier, and the Colonial section was badly in want of another officer. Every other chief of section declared his branch to be already overworked. I was not asked if anybody could be spared from my office, Russian and Chinese affairs being supposed to occupy fully all its time, but, desirous of helping Captain (now Lieutenant-General Sir Edward) Altham, I offered Robertson on loan, as his services would be very valuable, and he was anxious to acquire as much experience as possible.

The result was that, when war had come, he soon found himself in South Africa, whence he returned with two brevets, thus becoming a lieutenant-colonel in the army. After that he never looked back, and I congratulated myself on my judgment of character. Butler, whom he had replaced, also fully justified my recommendation, and was given a commission. Robertson was not one of those who forget, or even dislike, one who has done them a good turn : seventeen years afterwards, in 1916, when he was Chief of the Imperial General Staff, he sent me to the Emperor of Russia. It has always been a source of great pride to me to have been the means of procuring for him his first staff appointment in England, for I knew I was right as soon as we first met. We had not seen each other for years prior to 1916, a tribute to his excellent memory, and among his wealth of honours is the bâton of Field-Marshal.

The other incident was of a totally different nature. Mr. (now Sir Henry) Norman was assistant to Mr. W. H. Massingham, the editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, one of the best London newspapers. He came to see me at the War Office, and asked whether some important political deal

with the United States Government was under the consideration of both Governments. There had been some Press rumours to that effect, but my work had nothing to do with North America, and, if I had any confidential information, it could not, of course, be disclosed without authority.

Norman then asked me whether I was acquainted with the handwriting of Sir John Ardagh, my chief. The reply was in the affirmative, and Norman showed me a letter, purporting to have been his writing and signed by him, and addressed to Mr. Hay, the United States Ambassador at the Court of St. James's. This epistle was not a very good imitation of Ardagh's calligraphy, but the initial letter alone of his surname told me that the document was a forgery, and so I pronounced it to be. The purport was that the British Government was prepared to agree to some joint design in, as far as I recollect, the Far East ; whatever it was the statement, if true, would have startled the diplomatic world at least, and priority about it had been offered to the *Daily Chronicle*—on terms, of course.

I reported the matter to Sir John at once, showing him the document, and suggested that it would be advisable for me to meet the author and act according to circumstances. He agreed, and Norman arranged for him to be at the newspaper office about nine o'clock that evening, when I also would attend. The writer did not know me by sight evidently : when he came into the room Norman asked him whether the letter was genuine, and the other said it was. Norman then put the same question to me, who pronounced it to be a forgery, whereupon the former rang a bell, and told the attendant to fetch a constable.

This opened up an unpleasant and difficult situation, accentuated by the fact that the forger, a quiet-mannered young man, responded by falling with a thud at full length on the floor : we thought, at first, that his heart had failed under the shock, but he recovered consciousness after a few moments, by which time the boy in blue was on the scene. Norman told him that a forgery had been offered for sale, so the man was arrested, and we all proceeded to the police-station, where the charge was taken immediately.

It occurred to me that, although Norman was perfectly within his rights, it would be very undesirable to have the matter ventilated in the police-court; some people would be sure to believe that there was no smoke without fire, so Norman asked to withdraw the charge. Then came the difficulty: it had already been put on the charge sheet, and the Inspector, who had taken it, said the matter must now take its course; we were too late. On explaining the circumstances, however, and laying stress on the political scandal which might ensue—for the case was one which was bound to be sent for trial—the Inspector in charge expunged the record, and released the culprit.

The idea had come into my head that he might also be engaged in some other undesirable activities, so I said it would please me to search his lodgings and see what he had got there. It appeared that he rented a room in the Hatton Garden district, and the police warned Norman and me that it was a very dangerous region to visit at night without protection. Norman was as cool as a cucumber, and, whatever I may have looked like, terror seized me, but I was too cowardly to draw back! One difficulty was that the house to be visited was just beyond the border line between two police areas, and our Inspector could not therefore detail an officer to accompany us.

He did the next best thing, however, being very anxious to help, by sending a constable to take us to the limit of his territory, and warn his colleague on point duty there about the adventure. This policeman was exceedingly kind; neither of us was armed, and he mistrusted all the houses in the block. I reckoned that it would not take long to go through one room, especially as the culprit was evidently not an expert evildoer, so it was arranged that, failing our reappearance after being ten minutes in the house, he would come and look for us, after first calling for help. There was no reason for Norman to enter, but he insisted.

The guilty one had promised to disclose everything. His room had a writing-table with drawers in it, and he produced his keys, leaving me free to do whatever pleased me. There was no more diplomatic correspondence—



this was evidently a new line—but there were some papers and sketches relating to some of our coast defences, notably those around Gravesend and Chatham, where some alterations were known to be under consideration. On this occasion Russia was the Power concerned; the agent had got hold of nothing worth half a crown, but some letters from the Russian military agent in London, my friend, Colonel (now General) Yermolov, showed, what was no news, that he wanted definite information on certain points. If he had got it the knowledge could not have been of any real value, as any ordinary tourist could have seen for himself. The forger, being now in my power, and being, I believed, most anxious to free himself from compromising entanglements, was told to hand over to Colonel Yermolov—whom I happened to meet a few days afterwards—some quite good fabricated news about guns, armaments, and other military matters, and then try and get some honest work, for he was a well-educated fellow.

I wasted no time in my search, being in such a fright, and my constable was glad to congratulate us on our safe return within the time limit. Thus we all compounded a felony, but, as I said before, underground intelligence really amounts to very little, nothing to worry about in my opinion. The sequel confirmed my previous view, for, a few months later, I received a letter, with his address, from the erring one, in which he told me he had succeeded in obtaining a good situation, and had entirely broken with the past. Sir John Ardagh heartily approved of my action when I told him the details on the following or, rather, on the same, morning, for it was after midnight when everything was settled up.

The Battle of Omdurman and the occupation of Fashoda aroused, of course, great excitement in 1898. My work had nothing to do with France except in a very general way, and Major Marchand's expedition brought things within measurable distance of war. The Admiralty were requested by the War Office to send an officer across the Channel to see what was going on, especially at the ports. Calais was believed to be very heavily armed—there will be something to say about this when we come

to the year 1916—Marseilles, Toulon, Cherbourg might be assembling warships and transports ; altogether London, and, more particularly, the Foreign Office, wanted further news, for it was not known whether some of our consular cypher cablegrams had not been stopped by orders from Paris.

The Admiralty said it had nobody to spare, the French section at the War Office was fully occupied, and so the choice fell upon me, on the clear understanding that, if any trouble should arise over my visit, the authorities would disown me altogether, and put an end to any possible future career. I accepted the conditions, intending to do things my own way, and looked forward to a pleasant trip, going first from Calais to Milan, Genoa, and thence beginning with Toulon. At that date I took it for granted that the French Channel port was suitably equipped ; if it were not then so much the better. Were ships being collected, and were there any signs of military activity beyond the normal was what I wanted to learn.

On the morning of my departure from London there was a foreigner standing opposite my front door, and I recognised him again at Charing Cross station. There were no passports in those days and, travelling with hand luggage only, via Laon, I arrived at Milan on the following day, when I saw, for the third time, my foreign suspect. He had been, so far, a good sleuth, shadowed me at Genoa, where we passed the night, and was in my train for Toulon. Never having visited Monte Carlo I thought I might as well look in at the Casino. An excellent dinner and a win of about £10—the novice's luck—put me in an excellent humour for continuing my journey in the middle of the night. Falling asleep in the train, Toulon was overshot, and Marseilles was my next halt, after which I returned to Toulon. All this resulted in my shadow losing track of me, for I never saw him again.

My journey was quite successful : there were some large warships at Marseilles, of an old type, as even I could detect, but no concentration anywhere else, nothing but great, fine, practically empty harbours—except at Marseilles—everywhere. Lord Lansdowne, the Secretary of

State for War, and Mr. Goschen, the First Lord of the Admiralty, were both very complimentary to me on my return.

With the outbreak of the war in South Africa, in October 1899, my appointment to the divisional staff of Sir William Gatacre was announced ; it was a great stroke of good fortune, for, at that time, no other artillery officer had been selected for the army staff. The original plan of campaign was altered by the time we arrived at Cape Town, and, when our Head-quarters were ordered to East London, Gatacre very properly told me to get the maps of the country north of that port, and on no account to see him again without them. I found the staff office at Cape Town full of chests of maps—very indifferent ones I heard afterwards—but nobody had thought of unpacking them. Gatacre asked, when I returned to him mapless, why I had not carried out his instructions, and, when I said nothing had been unpacked, he ordered me to get them somehow. Foreseeing this, however, I had taken the precaution of getting Captain (now General Sir Francis) Davies to sign a paper that several days must elapse before his branch could possibly open the boxes and distribute their contents. Gatacre thereupon wrote a nasty letter to Buller, and we departed without them.

When he made his attempt on Stormberg he wanted a fairly senior officer to remain behind at his base, so he left me there, very naturally taking my immediate chief and friend, Ralph Allen. On things turning out badly, Gatacre sent a messenger to me so that I should telegraph in his name to Lord Lansdowne. Being a believer in frankness my cablegram described what had occurred and, later on in the day, I showed Sir William the copy. He was afraid that the original told too much, but, when I explained that he could not be attacked afterwards for having kept back something of importance, he saw the point at once. He was much gratified later to read in the London Press that his frank telegram had been thoroughly appreciated.

A lull followed ; the question of supplies had been somewhat awkward, but all difficulties in this direction

were promptly overcome by that most efficient officer, Major (now Major-General) Percy Hobbs. That the troops often had to wait many hours for the baggage train to reach them was not his fault, and the failure of my former efforts to have field kitchens introduced was felt severely.

Being of a robust constitution, and possessing also a digestion which nothing could impair, it was very annoying to feel aches in some of my bones after a time. This got worse, until it was exceedingly painful either to sit or lie down. Our medical officers could not understand it; there was nothing wrong anywhere, so a well-known South African practitioner was called in. He diagnosed the evil instantly: it was very acute rheumatism, to which some people were subject in that dry climate several thousand feet above the level of the sea; a change to the hospital ship, *Trojan*, was imperative, and there influenza attacked me. The upshot of it all was that, in the spring of 1900, I was sent to England on six months' sick leave.

Just before I was invalided home from South Africa an interesting episode occurred, of which I did not, however, hear until after my arrival in England. It seemed that there had been a great deal of trouble at Lourenço Marques, in Portuguese East Africa, by large consignments of munitions of war for the Boers passing through that port from European countries, notably Germany. It was suggested in London that I should be sent there as Consul-General, with very full powers to try and put a check on these imports. The difficulty was that nobody in England quite knew my whereabouts, so my wife was asked if she could enlighten the authorities. She knew, but, as she was not told the reason for the enquiry at the time, was suspicious, and gave a vague reply, so somebody else was nominated. It was very flattering to me, and I believe it was Sir John Ardagh who had suggested me to the Foreign Office, which agreed at once. The appointment was approved, but I could not be found! Sir Evelyn Wood, the Adjutant-General, told me the whole story on my return to England.

The voyage and a month at home practically restored my health, so I went to the War Office to ask for a Medical



Board and passage to Cape Town. It was then intimated to me that, according to advices from South Africa, the struggle was nearing its conclusion ; there was, it was said, no object therefore in my returning, and besides, the authorities at the War Office wished me to go to Berlin to replace Colonel Grierson, who had been permitted to take the field. The prospect was most alluring, although the views of the average German concerning Briton and Boer were well known to me. With the war approaching its end the military attachéship in Germany was more attractive than anything else. It had the additional allurements that my appointment would bring me again under the orders of my former delightful chief, Sir Frank Lascelles.

The German Emperor was asked whether he objected to me, and replied that he did not. I waited for days, and then for weeks, expecting to get my orders to proceed to Berlin in time for the coming of age of the Crown Prince, who would shortly be eighteen. Enquiry at the Foreign Office told me nothing : that Department, my new masters, had likewise been wondering at the delay of the War Office in submitting my name for Her Majesty's formal approval. Thereupon I went to the War Office, and was asked at once why I was absent from the German capital. On explaining that it was necessary for me to have official orders, the reply was that the Foreign Office must be the culprit. Its character being cleared, the Assistant Military Secretary accompanied me to his clerk's room, declaring that he had signed my nomination some weeks previously. Enquiry there led to the discovery of the missing document : it had been mislaid in a blotter !

Although too late for the coming of age festivities—a matter of no importance—Fate ordained that I should complete the full term, which had recently been reduced to three years. Some of that period—1900 to 1903—was intensely interesting, bringing me as it did into frequent contact with the German official world, and, what was still more interesting, with William II. He was rather fond of saying things to a military attaché—if he had confidence in him—which, if said to an ambassador, would have been

necessarily official, and might sometimes have had very far-reaching consequences.

On those occasions when His Majesty informed the Chancellor of what had passed between us, Sir Frank told me once that my reports to His Excellency agreed completely with those of the German Emperor. Want of space prevents me from dwelling on my appointment in Berlin, but some of the events there, in which I was involved, might throw some light, perhaps, on subsequent occurrences. My post was not, as it had been in Russia, a bed of roses, but it enabled me to make many new friends, to pick up the threads with old ones, and to acquire a fresh fund of knowledge which induced me later to resume the part of prophet!

Before my tenure at Berlin expired it was obvious that a titanic struggle must be the sequel to the ever-increasing armaments on the Continent. The date could not, of course, be foretold with certainty, but it was bound to lie within fairly narrow limits, because of the inexorable laws of economics: the financial situation would be the deciding factor in this respect. The continual increase of armies and navies must ultimately, as I reported at the time, bring the financing of unproductive expenditure to breaking point. It was becoming increasingly difficult to find more and more money, so that a few years would certainly see a catastrophe. Nations must either fight, hoping to conquer, or else become bankrupt, which they would be too proud to do without a struggle. It was likewise certain, more than twenty years ago, that Belgium could not escape being in the theatre of war, because neither France nor Germany would have sufficient elbow-room in the Vosges alone. It was just a chance which Power would be the technical aggressor. Meanwhile we were the only wise men in Europe: instead of bankrupting ourselves in the effort to maintain a huge army in addition to a huge navy we concentrated on one only of these objects; a commercial country like England could not have officered a great permanent land force.

It will be remembered that the German Emperor came to this country for the funeral of Queen Victoria in

February 1901. On the day of his return journey he lunched at Marlborough House with King Edward, about forty people being present, including myself. When the meal was over the King proposed the health of his nephew in most feeling terms, and thanked him most heartily for being here instead of presiding in Berlin, on January 27th, at his own birthday celebrations.

In reply William II, after expressing his gratification at the "magnificent" reception accorded to him on all hands, continued: "I believe there is a Providence which has decreed that two nations, which have produced such men as Shakespeare, Schiller, Luther and Goethe, must have a great future before them; I believe that the two Teutonic nations will, bit by bit, learn to know each other better, and that they will stand together to help in keeping the peace of the world. We ought to form an Anglo-German alliance, you to keep the seas while we would be responsible for the land; with such an alliance not a mouse could stir in Europe without our permission, and the nations would, in time, come to see the necessity of reducing their armaments."

At that time Germany possessed no powerful navy, nor could she, by any possibility, have secretly evolved one, together with the necessary naval bases. Negotiations were commenced regarding an alliance, but various causes, too lengthy to be mentioned here, resulted in their breakdown. The report of the German Emperor's speech, which appeared in the Court Circular on the following day, February 6th, was, as Sir Frank Lascelles—one of the guests—told me, a poor affair. This is what happened: on the evening of its utterance I was dining with the officers of the German military deputations, when a messenger arrived with a letter from Windsor, where the Court was. It commenced in a very flattering manner by saying that my memory was, doubtless, a good one, and commanded me to send a report of the Emperor's speech for publication in the Court Circular of the following day. The task was a simple one, but the actual pronouncement was not my composition. I heard afterwards that the messenger did not reach

Windsor in sufficient time, so the King's suite put their heads together, and compiled a rather hurried account for the Press.

Some of my Berlin experiences were remarkably interesting, for the German Emperor was always very nice to me personally after I had argued with and contradicted him. He was not likely to be convinced by my reasonings, but he was quite a patient listener. His Majesty had taken a violent dislike to Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, although at one time they had got on very well together. The reason was that their views about South Africa differed profoundly, so the Emperor let himself go one day, and said to me: "Chamberlain ought to be taken to South Africa, marched across the continent, and then shot."

"Sir," was my reply, "many of my countrymen would like to see Mr. Chamberlain Prime Minister of England."

"Oh, never! They couldn't."

My retort that many people wished it did not apparently affect the Imperial opinion in the least. He *was* angry with Mr. Chamberlain. My report of the matter to King Edward produced some very caustic comment, a sharp contrast to the "hidden hand" policy recorded in a previous chapter.

On relinquishing my appointment in Berlin in June 1903, Sir Frank Lascelles wrote such a very complimentary despatch on my activities that anybody, not conversant with official life, must have believed—what His Excellency sincerely hoped—that some fat professional plum would quickly fall into my lap. Some of our military authorities, however, looked upon a military attaché as being rather one of the idle rich.

On returning to England and half-pay the War Office was very nice in the "We will look after you" style, but, knowing that sort of talk, I was a doubting Thomas. The supply of officers was far in excess of the posts available, and we could not all be satisfied. After all, I had had a very good innings: from being a junior major in 1897 I was now a substantive colonel, having been promoted to that rank in 1901.



## CHAPTER XV

FORTUNATELY some unwarlike subjects also interested me, so that time did not hang heavily on my hands ; but, as the months passed without any sign from the dispensers of military patronage, the financial situation became unpleasantly acute. The competition for appointments was intense ; a rising—and since risen—officer told me of a comrade, who had ruined his prospects by marrying a divorced lady ; he added that he supposed the other had done the right thing, but he himself thought that one's own professional interests superseded everything else. Pushing was distasteful to me, perhaps because I did not expect to succeed in that line ! Migrating to a tiny cottage in Cornwall a pleasant winter was passed, and we were exceedingly lucky in having most kind friends at St. Michael's Mount, a fascinating place, where Lord and Lady St. Levan, together with some members of their family, were delightful hosts.

An earthquake then shook the War Office to its foundations. Lord Esher's Committee recommended that a Council should replace the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Roberts, and some officers were cast, like me, upon the world literally at a moment's notice. A Chief of the Imperial General Staff was created with other officers independent of him, but acknowledging his suzerainty ; the Deputy Adjutant-General was called a Director of Personal Services.

Unaware of the impending rumpus, and as the relations between Russia and Japan seemed to be very critical, I asked the Military Secretary, General Lane, about my prospects ; my letter caught him at a bad moment, so it was not surprising that his answer was a somewhat snappish one, to the effect that he knew nothing about

them, whether war should break out between those countries or not.

The wisest course seemed to be to retire from the army, and, on sending in my papers, my name soon appeared in the *London Gazette*, thus terminating my military career. Fortune, however, did not desert me, for a kind friend, Mr. Cecil Parr, chairman of one of the great London banks, said he would be very glad to consider me for employment as a financier; the outlook was therefore again decidedly bright; no doubt my knowledge of foreign countries influenced him.

While the Russo-Japanese negotiations were going on, war seemed at last to me to be certain. This did not appear to be the general opinion but, owing, perhaps, to some subconscious tendency to contradict everybody else, when the correspondent of the *Daily Mail* cabled, from St. Petersburg, that everything was amicably settled *bar the signing*, I boldly—for the first and last time in my life—became a “bear” of some Japanese stock. I could not say then whether Japan would win or lose, but I thought her securities must, in the first flush of excitement, fall heavily. Nothing was signed in Russia, and my Stock Exchange option proved to be a very satisfactory one.

When hostilities commenced I was on retired pay and, as we were staying in London, it occurred to me to look in at the Military Operations branch—formerly the Intelligence Division of the War Office—where I saw Grierson, its new chief. He said that my retirement had made any employment impossible. One never can tell: that same evening, February 26th, I received a letter from Lord Knollys, the King’s principal Private Secretary, telling me that His Majesty “is afraid you are making a mistake in leaving the army; he had told me to let the office know that he thought you would be a good officer to be attached to the Russian Army, but perhaps you do not now wish this.” What a firm friend King Edward was! I had not seen him for nearly a year, when he gave me his photograph on Derby day, 1903; in Diamond Jubilee’s year he mentioned, on the morning of the race,

that "if he does not lose his temper I do not see what is to beat us." On the second occasion His Majesty said : "I fear there is no chance this time of repeating Diamond Jubilee's victory." It would never have entered my impudent head to question any other owner about his horses' chances.

Casting high finance and all else to the winds I dashed off to Buckingham Palace, and was received at once by Lord Knollys. As my retirement had been actually gazetted, and, as the King did not approve of anybody except an officer on the active list getting the coveted appointment, it was clear that the matter would have to go before the Army Council to decide about my reinstatement. This would be about its first sitting, and not one of its members was known to me.

I was told to be at the Palace a day or two afterwards to learn my fate, and awaited the arrival of Spencer Ewart, Military Secretary to the Council. His first words—he spoke in rather a gloomy tone—were : "You are reinstated !" At that time no officer, who had once been gazetted out, had been brought back since the Crimean War, nearly fifty years previously. Mr. Arnold-Forster was Secretary of State—I had never seen him—and a precedent was created in my case. Sir Charles Douglas, the Adjutant-General, told a friend of mine after the event that an officer, who was a linguist, was probably a fool. I imagine that Mr. Arnold-Forster used his prerogative to overcome the military objectors.

King Edward received me immediately after I heard the news. Greeting me with the words : "Well, you have given us all a great deal of trouble," he was, as ever, kindness personified.

The Russian authorities agreed to accept a Mission of three officers, two of whom were to represent India : they were the late Sir Montagu Gerard and Major Home, both of the Indian Army. The former was in England at the time, and the latter was to go direct from his station to Manchuria. Gerard suggested to me that I should travel thither via the Suez Canal and Vladivostok, while he took St. Petersburg on his way, but the idea did not,

for several reasons, appeal to me, and besides, it was impracticable, because the King wished me to pass through the Russian capital and see the Emperor and Empress.

Gerard and I travelled together, leaving London on March 14th, and were detained for a very pleasant week in St. Petersburg. Their Majesties were most gracious, and, as an instance that Nicholas II was anxious to learn the truth, he told me to write to him direct on any matters of interest. This was a very flattering but awkward command; the probability was that my letters would ultimately reach their destination, but I was perfectly convinced that they would be opened by somebody else first, which might cause trouble, for there were bitterly warring factions in his metropolis. I decided not to write.

Sir Charles Scott was the British Ambassador at the time: he had replaced Sir Nicholas O'Connor about five years previously, and his successor, Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, was due to arrive in May. During my stay all my old Russian friends were just the same as ever, but there was a coolness between society and the English Embassy. This was, of course, due to our alliance with Japan, and, having heard both sides, there were, I thought, faults on each.

Our first objective was Mukden, the residence of the Viceroy, Admiral Alexyeev, and the troop traffic did not delay us to any appreciable extent. On April 2nd, I renewed my acquaintance with Lake Baikal, which we crossed in a sleigh, pretty well laden, in two hours and thirty minutes, a distance of twenty-nine miles. This was excellent going, for we had the same team of three wretched-looking ponies throughout. Mukden was reached on the nineteenth day after leaving St. Petersburg, and we were received most kindly by the Viceroy, who lived in a train. As the Russian Army was still small in numbers the idea, prevalent among his staff, was that serious fighting was unlikely to occur for, perhaps, four months or so.

After a couple of days' stay at Mukden we went south to Liaoyan, where General Kouropatkin was Commanding-in-Chief. He was subject to the Viceroy, who interfered



disastrously more than once. Given time Kouropatkin was, he told me, fairly hopeful, especially as he had got sufficient railway rolling-stock across Lake Baikal before the temporary line across it had to be removed in view of the coming thaw. It was also very pleasant to meet another old friend, Lauenstein, now a colonel, the senior member of the German Mission. He told me that there was a great block on the single line of railway at Mukden ; the system was bad : large numbers of Red Cross nurses and great quantities of medical stores were being sent south in advance of troops. General Jilinsky, Chief of the Viceroy's staff, was also in the habit of coming more or less often to Liaoyan, to confer with Kouropatkin, and always used a special train for the journey of thirty-seven miles ; this, said General Niedermüller, the head of the railway, was constantly dislocating the intricate arrangements for working the single line. It was known to me that the Russians were not good organisers, but I had expected something better than this.

The foreign officers on Kouropatkin's staff were evidently to be treated *en prince* ; pending the erection of a house for them they lived in a train. Prices, of course, had risen to staggering heights : before the war a Chinese cart and pony could be hired for a few pence daily, then the price went up to £5 daily, and by the end of May 1904, none were procurable on any terms ; I purchased my ponies and horses, and was lent a two-wheel Russian cart for baggage. The Chinese in Manchuria brought in abundant supplies at first.

Before leaving Mukden the Viceroy told us we were to go almost immediately to Port Arthur on a flying visit, a very attractive prospect ; we were on the point of starting when we heard the terrible news of the destruction of the flagship, *Petropavlovsk*, with the loss of many hundreds of gallant lives. Only a handful escaped, among them the Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovich, now the claimant to the Russian throne. I had known the admiral, Makarov, and admired him ; he was a very energetic man and a strict disciplinarian ; his widow was left so badly off that the Emperor granted her a pension of £2,000. Makarov

was unpopular among his subordinates, who disliked his driving power. Carelessness on board seems to have caused the disaster, although the Japanese gave out that a submarine sunk the ship: they had none, at least, not in those waters.

The rules laid down for the foreign Missions stated that no information was to be transmitted which could possibly benefit the enemy; such news as I did send was in letters to my wife and, after a time, the censor did not delay them for examination; this was proved by the dates of arrival: each letter was numbered, and not one failed to reach its destination. Grierson, the Director of Military Operations, wrote to her once to say that the only news the War Office received was through her reading between the lines. The Russian defeats, announced in the Press, spoke for themselves, and I did nothing improper.

Russian officers in the field had to arrange for their own supplies if possible, and so did I. Major Home did not remain long in Manchuria; his health broke down, and he was obliged to return to England. A former acquaintance of mine, the French General Silvestre, who had spoken so unpleasantly about Waldersee in 1900, represented France; according to him Japan could easily be beaten; might, indeed, be invaded. His idea was to sweep (*balayer*) her off the seas; this was after the defeats on the Yalu and at Vafango (Telissu).

It was during this campaign that I first met Kondratovich, Rennenkampf and Samsonov, and they certainly did not then show much ability. Each held high command in the Great War, and each was a complete failure: Kondratovich was dismissed the service, Samsonov shot himself, but Rennenkampf managed to survive.

Kouropatkin's position was most difficult: without having full powers, he was beset by demands for reinforcements from generals at the Front, whereas he, still uncertain about Japanese intentions, wished to keep what he had in reserve, some sixteen battalions, around Liaoyan. Foreign officers were told not to go into the city at night, unless accompanied by a Russian, as sentries, not knowing

our uniforms, might shoot. Silvestre was, indeed, mistaken for a Japanese—the uniforms being similar—once in the daytime, and arrested. The Swiss colonel, Audéoud, a harsh, persistent critic, was out of his element, and was soon recalled by request of the Russian authorities. Owing to the fortune of war Kouropatkin's forces had lost a number of guns; the Swiss gentleman, with some officers, Russian and foreign, was on the platform at Liaoyan station when some new field guns arrived from Russia. "What is the use," he enquired of another foreign representative, "of giving the Russians more guns? They do not know how to use those which they have!"

The Grand Duke Boris, brother of the one who had been blown up, was at Kouropatkin's Head-quarters, as representing the Imperial family; he was also very much in the way, and occupied train accommodation with friends of both sexes. He told me, on April 29th, that "It is a sad thing to say, but Makarov's death was a benefit!" On the same occasion, talking about Kouropatkin, His Imperial Highness remarked that the general had kept very cool so far, and he hoped he would remain so; he had not liked him as Minister of War, because His Excellency knew "nothing of the traditions of the Guards regiments"—being only an ordinary army officer—and meddled with them.

Don Jaimé of Bourbon was serving in the Russian Army, and he also claimed the throne of Spain. Now in the Spanish Mission there was a stout captain of Hussars—rather a fop—and he was asked one day whether he had met Don Jaimé. His answer was: "I do not know the name!" A member of the German Mission told me this story as a fact. The war correspondents of the Press remained, at first, only a few days at Liaoyan, and were then sent back to Mukden to vegetate; the instructions issued to them were clear enough, but one of them used a code—he was, I heard, an American—and found himself up against a still smarter censor.

A feature of the war was the remarkable number of Guards officers, who were either promoted to commands,

or else were appointed to the staff. A few were good men in the field, but family influence was usually the deciding factor, and the officers of the line—and Russia—suffered accordingly.

It was on May 1st that the crossing of the Yalu by the Japanese was confirmed, and the Russians were forced to retreat. Hitherto some at Head-quarters had believed the enemy was merely making a demonstration, but Lauenstein was not one of them. He had argued that the Japanese would never place an army on the Yalu, throw a bridge and not attack, but he was, he told me, in a minority of one among the foreign officers, and was now triumphantly justified; he had seen the Japanese during the Boxer troubles in 1900. General Silvestre had, it appeared, declared that the Japanese would be entirely wrong from a military point of view if they attacked on the Yalu. Experts differ! By the commencement of May, the ground had got into a very bad state in the plains, owing to heavy rain, and there were no materials for road making.

In the midst of these exciting events—on May 4th—the Swiss colonel complained, so Count Ignatiev said, that he had not been supplied with a certain toilet article, which gave rise to the false rumour that he was an hotel proprietor by trade. George Bobrinsky, an old St. Petersburg friend, on Kouropatkin's personal staff, told me that both St. Petersburg and the Viceroy had interfered with his chief's plans; he did not blame Zosoulich for the Yalu defeat, but those who put him there *en l'air* before Kouropatkin arrived, and insisted on keeping him isolated. This was really due to Jilinsky, the Viceroy's Chief of the Staff, and showed what his military capacity was worth. When the Great War broke out it was therefore impossible for me to believe, as so many experts, military and other, believed, that the incapable generals of 1904 had been transformed into reliable commanders within the brief space of ten years. In my report on the Russo-Japanese War is the following observation: "I place no credence in the theory of some that the present conflict will teach them (the Russian officers) a lesson not to be forgotten.



No military genius will enable a commander-in-chief to gain victories unless he can rely on his subordinates to carry out his plans efficiently."

Staffs in Russia were superabundant ; for instance, the Emperor had eighty-nine aides-de-camp-general and some fifty aides-de-camp ; it is true that they mostly held other appointments also. The Russian system of peace training was defective : at manœuvres, at the decisive moment, both sides attacked, each passing through the ranks of the other. The idea was to instil into the troops a consciousness of their invincibility, but some otherwise avoidable losses were caused in Manchuria, because the troops had never practised movements of withdrawal. In the German Army the beaten side, instead of halting on the ground, retired for some two or three hours.

The Viceroy had gone to Port Arthur and hoisted his flag, but returned hurriedly to Mukden on May 6th. He feared that he might otherwise be shut up in the fortress ; nevertheless, at such a crisis, and with only a single line of railway, he and the Grand Duke Boris actually took a special train each with a third one for their baggage ! The Viceregal train was fired upon, and the line was cut almost immediately after His Excellency had started. Zvegintsov, his aide-de-camp and my friend, told me this.

The mobilisation of the Tenth and Seventeenth Army Corps in European Russia was ordered to commence forthwith. Meanwhile discussion was rife among some of the Military Missions as to the proper method of conducting a campaign ; to hear certain of their members one might have thought that, whether they agreed or differed, none of the disputants could lose a battle or would fight one under unfavourable conditions. It was rather boring.

The prospect of sitting at Head-quarters for an indefinite length of time was not inviting ; it was certainly very interesting to get first-hand information from my old Russian friends on the staff, but I wanted to see the troops in the field, and lead a more active and useful life. It was therefore arranged, on May 10th, that I should join

the First Siberian Army Corps, which was assembling south of Liaoyan ; it was the one which I asked to join because it was to attempt the relief of Port Arthur. In the meantime Liaoyan had been encircled by a ring of field works, excellently made, with numbers of pits (*trous de loup*), deep, and provided with sharp-pointed stakes. The Russians were hampered by the fact that they had only received their quick-firing field guns about four months previously, and in many, if not in most, cases, had not carried out any practice with them ; the supply of ammunition was no doubt a factor.

On May 11th Gerard and the other Chiefs of Missions dined with Kouropatkin, when the Russian Commander told the former—what he told me not long afterwards also—that he had been opposed to the war, had said so to the Emperor at a Council meeting, had declared that it would last one year and a half and cost not less than eighty-five millions sterling ; Russia, he had said, was not prepared for war. This justified my former expressions of opinion when India used to get so alarmed about trifling movements in Central Asia. During our brief stay at Mukden the Viceroy had also hinted that the struggle might have been avoided if the diplomatists had not insisted on sticking to forms, thus losing the substance for the shadow.

By May 14th Port Arthur was completely cut off ; the supply of ammunition for its heavy guns was dangerously low, and Kouropatkin had called for volunteers to accompany a train-load of high-explosive shells. It had got through in the nick of time under the gallant Lieutenant-Colonel Spiridonov. By this time Kouropatkin wanted to revert to his original plan, namely, to retreat to Mukden and concentrate there, but the Viceroy again interposed his overriding authority and said he must fight at Liaoyan. When taking leave of Kouropatkin, on proceeding to join the First Siberian Army Corps, I met another old friend, Prince Troubetskoi, aide-de-camp to the Emperor, who had arrived from St. Petersburg to join the Head-quarters Staff. He confirmed the news that Kouropatkin had always been against accepting battle on the Yalu.

General Baron Stackelberg was my new commander ;

he was noted for his personal bravery, coolness and discipline, and had commanded a cavalry corps before the war. It seemed that Fate always raised some difficulty about my various appointments. On this occasion my permit from General Kouropatkin was much more comprehensive than similar documents issued to other foreign officers ; it gave me a free hand to join any body of troops, to make notes and take photographs. Considering the official relations between England and Japan my pass was a fresh proof, if one were needed, of the magnificent manner in which the Russians would treat one in whom they had confidence.

Arriving at Stackelberg's Head-quarters train on May 19th, in the afternoon, I found his aide-de-camp, who said that his chief had not received any notification from General Head-quarters about me. My own special pass being, however, quite in order, Stackelberg accepted it, and was, from the very commencement of our relations, extremely nice and helpful. His acting Chief of the Staff was Colonel Gourko, son of the celebrated Field-Marshal ; he was a cavalry officer, very kind, and we were to meet again during the Great War. Gourko had been military attaché with the Boers during the South African struggle ; shortly after I joined Stackelberg, Major-General Ivanov—who commanded an army during the Great War—arrived to relieve the acting Chief of Staff, and, our force having been increased, the advance southwards was commenced towards the end of May. Meanwhile some of our batteries carried out gun practice for the second time only with the quick-firers : the discipline was very good but the shooting poor.

Kouropatkin paid us a visit before our Head-quarters moved, and said his plans had been overridden by the Viceroy, who insisted on an immediate move towards Port Arthur, whereas the nominal Commander-in-Chief wished to keep his forces as they were, pending the arrival of more guns. Alexyeev's meddling led to disastrous results.

A very pleasant French artillery officer, Commandant Cheminon, a general in the Great War, was also with

Stackelberg's corps, and his complaints were bitter about the refusal to give him the information which he desired ; officially we were kept in the dark, but, so far as I was concerned at any rate, it was easy to keep well posted ; the Russians themselves knew a good deal about the Japanese, but by no means everything. The former were fortunate, in 1904, in having always been accustomed to what we should term the utter lack of any sanitary arrangements ; the weather was hot, the water bad, and one would have expected severe outbreaks of cholera, typhoid and dysentery, yet none of these diseases materialised except some mild cases of the last-named illness.

The first week of June saw Stackelberg's force collecting round Vafango (Telissu), and we were visited by some Spanish, Chilian and Swiss officers, but they did not stay long and, not having brought their own provisions and cooking-pots, were surprised and hurt to feel the pangs of hunger : they had evidently not studied the administrative system of the Russian Army. We also lost Cheminon ; Stackelberg told me that he had received so many complaints from him about not being supplied with information, that he had sent him off to join Major-General Samsonov, who commanded some cavalry, mostly Cossacks. Stackelberg said he would then be in a position to obtain early news !

Stackelberg and Samsonov were not very good friends : the latter complained one day that his chief had been " abusing " him more than once ; this remark was made ten days before the battle of Vafango (Telissu). The fact was that, apart from Samsonov's abilities as commander of a cavalry screen, his troops were not well trained. The concentration of the First Siberian Army Corps was nearly completed on June 5th ; until then the question of supply had been very difficult, the line being a single one, and had caused my commander grave anxiety. He was unable to concentrate all his force, because Kouropatkin, anxious about the Japanese from the Yalu side, would not allow him to do this until the very eve of the battle, when some of Stackelberg's reserves arrived too late, but this did not affect its result.



He was inclined to think, he told me, that the enemy would not do more than make a reconnaissance in force ; Samsonov's cavalry had reported him as advancing with quite a different intention, but my chief told me he had not much faith in its information. Stackelberg was always very good to me ; beset with the most serious problems he could find time to tell me his plans and difficulties, and we used to go together to examine ground suitable for accepting battle. He was not at all robust, but his will overcame the frailty of his physique. No man could ever have been cooler under any circumstances, and he was a very prominent mark for the foe, because he rode a white charger, and wore a well-starched white linen jacket with blue overalls ; this frequently drew the Japanese fire upon him, and he had some wonderful escapes.

After some outpost skirmishing things became more serious on the afternoon of June 14th. The ground chosen was rolling and hilly ; riding all along the position on the previous afternoon it was evidently as good as could be found, but the right flank was open to a turning movement unless the cavalry should keep a sharp look-out. On my saying something about this Stackelberg replied : " I have a squadron or so near Fu-chao, but, if three Japanese squadrons advance, mine will retire without finding out the Japanese strength."

This remark had a curious sequel : Stackelberg was very fond of Gourko, whom he used to take with him, instead of Ivanov, when examining positions. On the evening in question, June 14th, after some fighting in which my commander and his staff were taken, at first, for a battery of Horse Artillery, thus drawing instantly some Japanese shrapnel fire, Gourko received a note, while we were in conversation.

After reading it he said it was a message from Samsonov to the effect that the enemy was preparing a move against the Russian right flank ; I remarked that his chief had mentioned the possibility to me, and would be glad to hear the news. My companion replied that Samsonov's cavalry was useless, and that he did not intend to worry Stackelberg about the message. He would have been right

nine times out of ten. On June 15th, the day of the battle, the turning of our right flank was the deciding factor and, altogether, the Russians had a good deal of difficulty in extricating themselves after heavy losses. Gourko was relegated, when his omission became known, to Press censorship work for a time, but soon obtained an active command, and did very good work.

As regards his suppression of Samsonov's message it was my good fortune to meet a Japanese officer, Lieutenant-General Saisho, at Port Arthur five years afterwards, and he asked me whether Stackelberg had any inkling of the impending flank attack, so I told him exactly what had occurred. He was much interested, because the idea had been his own, and the Japanese had wondered whether the scheme would materialise in that open country.

It is easy, after an event, to criticise staff work, but it was a difficult matter to withdraw in good order; there had been heavy rain which rendered the ground very holding, and the troops, in full marching order, became worn out with night as well as day marching; nor was it always easy for mounted people to keep awake. We reached eventually a new position, south of Liaoyan, and, so to say, refitted. Heavy drinking among Russian officers was not uncommon in those days any more than it had been formerly with us, and it had been a matter of conjecture whether the nerves of any of them would suffer in consequence. It was never once during the campaign suggested by anybody, foreigner or Russian, to me that they had been in any way affected, and the magnificent courage displayed by all ranks both in Manchuria and during the Great War has never been disputed.

After Vafango (Telissu), during the retreat, I came across Captain Reichmann, a member of the United States Mission; he had come from General Head-quarters to see the action, and we made acquaintance.

His great desire was to be with troops in the field, so I asked Stackelberg whether he might remain with the First Siberian Corps, and he at once agreed most kindly to the proposal. Reichmann and I got to know each other very well indeed, and, later on, he told me something about our

disaster at Sanna's Post during the South African struggle. He was with De Wet, and our people were seen coming along without taking any precautions. As the leading files rounded a corner the word went forth: "Hands up, Tommy," and this went on for an appreciable time until somebody fired a rifle. Reichmann said to me: "If we did not know each other so well I would not say it, but somebody on your side ought to have been shot for permitting such gross carelessness." My friend had emigrated as a young man from Germany, enlisted and worked his way up; he was a splendid fellow in every sense of the word; I believe he is now a general officer, and was, very properly, gathered up into the American General Staff on its formation.

Shortly after Vafango (Telissu) it became necessary for me to visit Liaoyan in order to get some more provisions, and my German friend, Lauenstein, was very glad to see me; he wanted some first-hand information. Among other things I told him, on June 25th, that "they (the Russians) will never win a battle during the whole of the campaign." Well aware as he was of many weak points in the Russian Army, my words startled him, and he replied: "*Ach! Sie müssen doch endlich siegen*" (Oh, but they must surely win in the long run). The want of cohesion, the jealousies, the disputes, the constant meddling and bad management had, after Vafango (Telissu), rooted this impression firmly in my mind. Other causes might wear out Japan, but my opinion was strengthened by a number of factors between that action and the great battle of Liaoyan, which commenced on August 30th.

I was standing one day on the railway platform at Liaoyan, on my way back to my corps—I had been to get some stores—when General Bilderling, who commanded the Seventeenth Army Corps from Russia, arrived. We were old acquaintances—he had been Deputy-Chief of the Russian General Staff at St. Petersburg—and, just as we welcomed each other, the Assistant Quartermaster-General came up and said that Kouropatkin, who had gone south, wished to see him immediately, as a great battle was imminent. Bilderling replied that he was tired after his

journey of several weeks' duration, and proposed to rest a day in Liaoyan so as to refresh himself. The Assistant Quartermaster-General expostulated, saying that Kouropatkin's orders were precise, and that the single line of railway was blocked by the special train waiting to convey the general to his chief. He declined to go, and spent the night at Liaoyan ! He had very influential connections.

A young friend of mine in the Guards was a subaltern in March 1904, and, by the end of that year, was a full colonel without having done a day's military duty anywhere. Insubordination in the higher ranks was not very uncommon, but the culprits were often advanced afterwards to higher posts. On August 19th, a few days before the great battle of Liaoyan, General Stackelberg, who liked to see things for himself, took me with him to inspect his outpost troops ; the Japanese might advance at any moment. We started early on our surprise visit, and would have arrived sooner than was the case at the outpost commander's head-quarters, were it not that Stackelberg's staff were poor map readers, and we lost our way.

Arriving eventually about eight o'clock we discovered the outpost commander fast asleep in bed ; he was Major-General Rehbinder, formerly a Guards officer ; the distribution of his troops was foolish : he had not thrown up even the slightest of field works, nor did he know how to get across the river which ran between his head-quarters and his troops. After Stackelberg had finished with him—in my presence—Rehbinder got hold of me, and complained that he thought his commander was very unkind, seeing that they were old personal friends ! And Rehbinder was a type.

It was really wonderful, not that the splendidly stubborn Russian Army suffered defeat in every subsequent great battle after Vafango (Telissu), but that it was not routed or even captured earlier in the struggle. The explanation is that, in Russia, influential family connections or friends were almost paramount, and officers, pushed on to high posts, had been brought up to think nothing of duty ; the sternest monarch could not, single-handed, have



prevented this. The Viceroy withheld, at times, important information from Kouropatkin, and Jilinsky, his Chief of the Staff, was worse than useless. It was lamentable to see the magnificent courage of officers, men and also women, so terribly wasted in Manchuria and, of course, ten years later. I knew an officer's young wife, in uniform, who actually served at the Front, and was wounded; nor was this a solitary instance.

Liaoyan, the long series of battles on the Sha-ho, Mukden proved conclusively that an aggressive war is unsuited to the Russian temperament, and the Great War showed that a nation does not unlearn its characteristics in the brief space of ten years.

Mention must be made of the invaluable aid rendered to the Russians by the Scottish Presbyterian Missions at Liaoyan and Mukden. Doctor Westwater was the head of the former, and Doctor Christie supervised the other. Thousands of wounded passed through their hands, and were treated with every possible care in the admirably equipped Mission hospitals; the wives of both these devoted men died unfortunately. The staffs were as helpful as their chiefs, and the Emperor of Russia was, he told me, greatly touched by their unvarying kindness.

## CHAPTER XVI

THE Russians had always underrated their enemy, but, by degrees, their forces in the theatre of war were increased until it became necessary to form them into armies, one result being that Kouropatkin was at last appointed Commander-in-Chief. This augmentation of strength would not have been possible but for the wonderful energy of Prince Khilkov, the Minister of Communications. The idea of a railway round the southern end of Lake Baikal had originally been merely adumbrated as something which might be done in the course of long years, but that remarkable man had it constructed, in spite of the great engineering difficulties, within a few months.

Our hosts were extraordinarily kind: the war correspondents had been grumbling all the time at having their activities unreasonably, as they thought, curtailed, so a smart American, Mr. McCormick, evolved a brilliant idea: when the battle of Liaoyan was going badly for the Russians he decided to get captured by the Japanese, who would, he doubted not, give him all kinds of facilities. Soon discovering his error he contrived to escape them, and sent a long telegram, from, I think, Newchang, in which he criticised the Russians most severely, and, most unfairly—through ignorance—made false accusations against them. He then returned to our side to be confronted presently with his own spiteful telegram. His Government could scarcely have protested had he been severely punished, instead of which he was permitted to resume his former duties.

Some of the correspondents were very able and judicious men, especially Mr. (now Captain) McCullagh. During the battle of Liaoyan there appeared a small man in plain everyday clothes, and carrying an enormous telescope.

Stackelberg and his staff were on a hill, in full view of the enemy, who had a nasty habit of sending shells against us—Stackelberg, in his white jacket and the bright sun, made an excellent mark—and a piece of one of them struck McCullagh's right hand and knocked the telescope down a defile close by.

An American had induced him to purchase this cumbersome instrument, and McCullagh began to climb down in order to retrieve the thing; we expostulated with him, as there were plenty of shells bursting around us. Fortune favoured me, for I was only grazed once in the side, but McCullagh's injury was more serious. He declared that, as he had made the purchase on behalf of his employers, get back the telescope he must. Successful in the attempt, he then went to a dressing-station some distance away, and, when his fingers had been bound up, he returned to his post of vantage, like the gallant fellow he is. After the war he asked me to write a preface to his work on the campaign, but the War Office refused to allow me to do this, while, practically simultaneously, Sir Ian Hamilton published a large book on the same subject, which must have been a very profitable undertaking.

As the autumn wore on after the series of battles on the Sha-ho—at that time the greatest which had ever been fought—it became evident that both sides would settle down for the winter, and that nothing of importance would occur for some months. The War Office wished to see me instead of Gerard, and Kouropatkin gave me leave of absence with permission to rejoin later. Lieutenant-Colonel Schuyler, of the United States Army, and Captain Reichmann were likewise ordered home, so we travelled together; they were delightful companions and, in recognition of my services as interpreter, presented me afterwards with a very handsome present, one of my most treasured possessions.

It took us some time to reach Harbin from Mukden—my corps had been lying in the neighbourhood of the latter city—and there was such a block of traffic at Harbin that our carriage could not be moved either backwards or forwards for thirty-six hours. Eventually, however, we

woke up one morning, and Reichmann remarked : " Well, we are on our way back to Mukden." So we were ! We had been hitched on to the wrong train, and, after some hours, were again deposited at Harbin. The railway journey to St. Petersburg lasted twenty-five days—the longest one in my experience.

So far as England was concerned the outstanding feature of the 1904 campaign was that it burst the Russian bubble ; apart from the fact that Russia had, as I had always maintained, far more important things to consider than an attack on India, she was not, and could not be, for many years at least, in a position to attempt that undertaking.

The Emperor received me immediately after my arrival in St. Petersburg ; Sir Charles Hardinge (now Lord Hardinge of Penshurst) had arranged this for me before my arrival. He was the fifth British Ambassador to Russia with whom I had had relations. Lady Hardinge was not only a very charming lady but was endowed with indisputably great ability as well. Russians have their own peculiar traits, and one of them is that, when things go wrong, they usually prefer to keep themselves to themselves. As Hardinge took up his duties after the outbreak of war the question of his customary official reception was a delicate one : it was by no means certain that Russian official and private society would avail themselves of the invitation to attend, and this would have been, of course, extremely awkward for the personal representative of his Sovereign. The Ambassador settled the matter in a very adroit manner by avoiding the risk which the function would have entailed.

When the Emperor received me on December 28th, he was not pessimistic ; the vastly augmented Russian Army would have time to be put into proper shape during the winter, and Japan's dangerously weak point, finance, was, of course, well known to her enemy. His Majesty mentioned that I had not, in response to his wish, written to him from the seat of war, but I was able to explain this in a perfectly satisfactory way by saying that, having been with troops in the field all the time, except just at



the outset, when my letters would have been valueless, it would have been too dangerous to run the risk of writing. The Emperor was most kind, and told me to be sure and see him before returning to Manchuria. Hardinge said that the political situation in Russia had become dangerous ; reforms had been granted, and then annulled, which was like giving a hungry dog a bone and then taking it away from him.

Before leaving St. Petersburg for London I went to see the Chief of the General Staff at the Emperor's request. Like many other officers of high rank in the capital and in the field, he, General Tselebrovsky, was quite confident about the ultimate result. Indeed, their confidence in their own troops induced some irresponsibles to believe that, even in 1904, we would have been an easy prey in Asia ! In fact on one occasion a Russian officer at the Front, a little the worse for liquor, criticised England bitterly to me, and said that preparations for the invasion of India on a gigantic scale were even then being made ; he was very much hurt when I laughed at him.

The unfortunate Grand Duke Serge, the Governor-General of Moscow, was blown to bits on February 17th, 1905 ; charges about his profiteering on a stupendous scale had long been rife. Peculation in Russia has been mentioned already, but here is a curious instance of it : on joining the First Siberian Army Corps a first-aid packet was issued to me ; my graze at Liaoyan was not of a nature to require any bandaging, and the packet returned to England with me. A few days afterwards, in Hertfordshire, a gallant young friend—Guy Reynolds—was thrown from his horse out hunting and brought to my father-in-law's residence. He was badly cut about the head, so my first-aid bandage was requisitioned, pending the arrival of the surgeon. It was then found to be too small for anything except a very large-sized doll ! When one thinks of the millions of similar bandages which must have been made, it is evident that there was big money in robbery of this description.

King Edward was staying at Chatsworth at the time of my return to England, but His Majesty received me

immediately after his arrival thence in London. He was intensely interested in my adventures, and was just the same as ever to me. Before leaving Manchuria, when operations had practically ceased for the winter, an opportunity had occurred for me to write an illuminating letter to General Grierson; I was not then aware that the War Office wished to see me. I had sent a copy of it to the King, so that His Majesty was well posted. At the time of writing this letter the general situation was known to all the world, and there was nothing wrong in my giving details of past events. In fact, when taking leave of Kouropatkin, before starting for England, he said that I would have much of interest to communicate to my superiors.

My task was to set to work immediately to write my report on the campaign of 1904. Having ample notes this was easy but lengthy: confidential printing always takes more time than ordinary typography, and the manuscript had to be very carefully prepared. To do this it was thought advisable for me to go to the south of France, partly to escape the attentions of the military correspondents of the British Press, who were hot on my trail; they had seen in the Court Circular that the King had received me, and one or two tracked me to my lair. These able men had, necessarily, been working very much in the dark, and were disappointed when I declined to give any information of any kind whatever; my promise to the Russian authorities was a very proper excuse.

After my return from France to superintend the revising of my *magnum opus* it was a revelation to me to discover how amazingly popular I had become. Invitations from all sorts of people for all kinds of things, applications from generals and other officers to attend me as my orderly or even servant in the theatre of war were numerous. "You never came to dine with me," "I do so want to see you," and similar assertions of affection might almost have turned my poor head. Like other things, however, all this soon passed; 'tis human nature.

Meanwhile, before my report was ready for issue, the

Japanese had set the ball rolling again sooner than had been expected, and the capture of Mukden, in the early part of 1905, set the crown on their wonderful series of great victories. There was, however, no sign as yet that Russia intended to accept defeat and make peace. It seemed certain that, in the last resort, she would rely upon financial distress wearing down her enemy, and so I left England again on April 29th.

The Emperor received me on May 5th at Tsarskoe Selo, where His Majesty was permanently in residence, and, after my audience, I was conducted to the apartments of the Empress. There had been dreadful trouble in the capital about three months previously, when great numbers of the people were massacred; the notorious Father Gapon, in the pay of the police, had led these unfortunates astray in their attempt to speak with the Emperor. It will be seen later that the equally notorious Protopopov, Minister of the Interior, was not averse to causing rioting, in 1917, misled by the delusion that its cruel suppression would keep the inhabitants, however hungry, quiet.

Neither the Emperor nor his Consort were so sanguine about the outcome of the war as they had been formerly, and Her Majesty spoke to me about the massacre; the unfortunate lady had been misled, and could not see the other side of the picture. Hardinge was in England at the time of my return to Russia, resuming his duties very shortly afterwards. My Russian friends—most of them more critical than ever of the poor Empress—were dejected, which was not surprising. The difficulty with Her Majesty was that, while she certainly welcomed—so far as my experience went—discussion, and never took offence at frankness, she literally did not, as she told me later, know where to turn in search of truth.

My departure from the capital was delayed for eleven days, because it was impossible to secure a seat earlier in the train from Moscow to Irkutsk; my baggage on this occasion was more formidable than a year previously; most of it had been lost after the battle of Vafango (Telissu) in the preceding June and, in addition to getting a fresh outfit for summer and winter, I was taking out a

considerable supply of tinned foods, rum, and cognac for distribution among some of those who had been so good to me in 1904.

During this journey to Irkutsk the Russians were very vigilant : after leaving Moscow the train stopped every time that a big bridge was reached ; soldiers with fixed bayonets then boarded it, one or two in each carriage ; passengers had to remain in their compartments, and all windows had to be closed. Irkutsk was reached on May 22nd, and, as events proved, it was to be my terminus.

A connecting train for Manchuria was due to start on the day of my arrival, but I was met by an officer, who said I could not be permitted to proceed, in spite of my official pass, and I would have to wait at Irkutsk for some days, pending instructions from the new Commander-in-Chief, Linievich, who had replaced Kouropatkin. He was said to have made new rules about foreign officers, and delay was inevitable. I might, he told me, have to retrace my steps.

This was, of course, exceedingly annoying, as I wanted to get on ; in order to make quite sure that there would be no delay I had taken the precaution, after leaving Moscow, to telegraph to Linievich's Chief of the Staff, and also to Colonel Bazarov, who was more particularly looking after foreign Missions with the army, asking them to telegraph to the care of the commandant at Irkutsk for him to inform me where I would find the Head-quarters of the foreign Missions. The officer at the railway station declared that no message had come from anybody. He was very civil but firm, and, of course, was not the originator of the plot, as it turned out to be, being merely an elderly lieutenant-colonel, Berjanovsky by name.

On the following day, May 23rd, the original of this telegram from Army Head-quarters was sent to me : "Commandant Irkutsk. Please inform English Colonel Waters that the foreign military agents are returning about 10th (i.e. 23rd) May. General Oranovsky." I assumed this to mean that the foreign officers were returning either to Harbin or to wherever Army Head-quarters might be ; when the message was despatched



the G.H.Q. were at Godzyadyan, for this was the despatching station.

My next move was to interview Berjanovsky, and point out that this telegram had been received on May 21st, that is to say, on the day prior to my arrival at Irkutsk ; he had therefore made a deliberately false statement, and I requested a seat in the train for Manchuria on May 24th. He thereupon remarked that the message did not say whither the foreign Missions were going, and I retorted that, as it must be either to Harbin or to G.H.Q., the accommodation should be reserved for me.

Berjanovsky countered this legitimate request by advising me to interview Colonel Birdin, recently arrived from Harbin, and commandant of all the railway gendarmerie in Transbaikalia, with his Head-quarters at Irkutsk. In order to prepare that person for my visit I wrote to him (in Russian) that "Colonel Waters begs most respectfully to ask whether he is permitted to proceed on his journey, in order to join the foreign officers, who, according to telegrams in Khabarovsk journals, have been making a tour in the Usuri or Amur regions. The former Commander-in-Chief invited Colonel Waters to return to the field army ; if there be now objections to his doing so Colonel Waters begs most respectfully to be informed of them."

When I sent in my card to the Colonel the demeanour of the orderlies at his office was devoid of that smartness to which my former experiences in Russia had accustomed me ; probably they had overheard their chief commenting about me and the British generally—it must be remembered that our alliance with the enemy, especially an Asiatic one, had roused deep resentment in Russia.

On being admitted, after some slight delay, to Birdin's presence, he asked me at once for my permit. There were two : one from Kouropatkin, authorising me to go anywhere, and the other was my original one, issued by the General Staff in St. Petersburg in March 1904. I said that, on enquiry there, about a fortnight previously, the General Staff had informed me that, as my papers were perfectly in order, no fresh pass would be required.

Birdin replied that Linievich, the new Commander-in-Chief, had made new rules, that my permits were "worthless," and that no foreigners were now allowed to proceed east of Lake Baikal. His manner was unpleasant, and I pointed out that I had taken leave of the Emperor and Empress prior to rejoining the Army. Birdin replied that he cared nothing about that—he was perfectly sober—so I asked him for the favour of a written answer to my letter.

He thereupon called in another officer, and told him to write that I would not be permitted to proceed. The latter said something to his commander in a low tone, which I could not catch, and Birdin's answer was likewise inaudible. Presently the other returned, and Birdin handed me the following (in Russian): "In reply to the letter of May 10th (i.e. 23rd new style) I hereby inform the English Colonel Waters that foreigners, with the exception of military agents and official correspondents, are not allowed to enter Manchuria or Transbaikalia without having first obtained sanction to do so." He knew as well as I did that this rule was effective before he was born.

This epistle shows an entire absence of the courteous wording usual in official Russia, even when requests had been refused. After perusing the letter I told Birdin that it could not apply to me, as I was an officially accredited military agent. "I do not know that you are," was his reply. Pointing out that he must be aware of my position as he had seen my passes, he said again that they were worthless. Of course, he knew he was lying, for my papers had been reinforced by General Oranovsky's telegram, which he had sent me, in reply to mine.

"Scratch a Russian and you may find the Tartar," is an old saying, and men of Birdin's stamp were frequently taken from a very bottom drawer indeed. Being careful to restrain my temper I begged Birdin to be so very kind as to telegraph himself to the Russian Army Head-quarters, stating the case. "I could, but will not" (*ya nye boudou*), was his answer, adding that I was to return to St. Petersburg. His manner had become more and more unpleasant as our

interview continued. On my making one more attempt to get him to telegraph he asked me: "If you were a military attaché with the army why did you leave it?" I told him that I had taken leave home when operations came to a standstill during the winter, to which he retorted that, having once left Manchuria, the new rule was that I could not go back there.

He then went on to say that he had just recently received a telegram informing him that all the foreign officers were leaving for Europe, and that I was to do the same thing immediately. There was nothing else left for me to do; Birdin was in command at Irkutsk, and it would have been useless to approach the civil Governor-General, as the military people recognised no interference from the officials of the Ministry of the Interior, or vice versa, as I had learned when arriving in Irkutsk in 1897.

Curiously enough, eleven years afterwards, when I was with the Emperor Nicholas, Colonel Bazarov was on the staff at Mohilov; we discussed the Irkutsk incident, which he remembered perfectly, as he had been attached at that time to the foreign Missions; he recollected Oranovsky's telegram, for my information, about the movements of those Missions. The message as given to me merely stated they were returning—Birdin said to Europe—but Bazarov, who saw it later, told me it read: "Are returning about 10th (i.e. 23rd) May to *Harbin*," which had been my theory until Birdin ordered me to retrace my steps.

The telegraph operator would certainly not have left out any portion of a Head-quarters' telegram, so it is obvious that Birdin had the words "to *Harbin*" expunged. The gendarmerie in Russia was accustomed to this sort of thing, as everybody is aware; it had to be done carefully so that my suspicions should not be aroused, and this piece of work accounts for the fact that the message, by the date on it, reached Birdin the day before my arrival at Irkutsk, but its existence was denied until the two most important words had been erased. This telegram must be at the War Office with the papers in the case, or in the Embassy archives if Hardinge did not forward it. It would be interesting to know whether our experts can

trace the mutilation. Bazarov's statement substantiates my report of the incident, and confirms the judgment of men like Lord Sydenham, Sir Thomas Kelly-Kenny, and others, qualified to form an opinion, as to my subsequent treatment.

It was open to me to inform London, in 1916, after Bazarov told me of Birdin's scandalous conduct ; holding at the time an important post and being therefore in touch with the great world, it might have interested some of its members had I done so. My sense of proportion decided me to say nothing : we were all engaged in a life-and-death struggle, and what had happened years previously to a mere pawn in the game was no longer of any account. Any bitterness of feeling had passed with time, pushed into the background by more important things, and I have never mentioned Bazarov's evidence until now.

Before my train left Irkutsk Birdin stood outside my compartment—I suppose to satisfy himself that his order was carried out—and spoke “at me” most offensively to other passengers ; perhaps he also wished to goad me into turning on him, when he would have had witnesses on his behalf ; if so he must have been disappointed at my remaining dumb. There are numerous instances of Russian officials, in outlying places, acting very unscrupulously and lying about it. An instance, taken from my report on the Russo-Japanese War, and printed before I left England to return to Manchuria, may be cited :

“The unblushing readiness with which lies were sometimes uttered was curious. I took some photographic films to be developed, and was told that the chief of the gendarmerie had seized some of them. I explained to him that they ought to be returned to me. I showed him my pass, which authorised me to go anywhere and photograph anything. Instead of frankly saying a mistake had been made, he replied that some stupid subordinate had taken the films. When I told him that my information was altogether different, he continued to assure me that his statement was correct. He was not in the least put out by my inability to accept his version.” In this particular instance the gendarme feared trouble for himself unless he should



lie, for I was within reach of superior authority who would promptly have twisted his tail in view of my permit to do what seemed good to me. The fellow had known of my pass all along, for we were at General Head-quarters, and copies of permits, issued to foreign officers, were in his possession. The photographer had informed him, at the time, who I was. Accustomed to bully he had wanted to try it on, and ran up against a snag !

The War Office and the British Embassy were, of course, informed by me, by telegram, that I had been directed to return, and I heard nothing more until after my arrival in St. Petersburg, when I proceeded at once to report the matter to the ambassador, who had resumed his duties. Having known Sir Robert Morier so well it was a cause for regret to me that he no longer represented England, for I could imagine the sulphurous manner in which he would have taken my part. Hardinge was of a different temperament ; nevertheless I felt perfectly certain that his support and sympathy would be accorded to me unreservedly. The ambassador, however, did not agree at all ; he said his great object was to avoid " incidents " and " You have created an incident." It was surely obvious that Colonel Birdin had created it, and in an exceedingly offensive manner.

There was a lot of correspondence about the case, and my intention was to ask the Emperor to order one of his officers to accompany me on my return journey to Manchuria. His Majesty would certainly have done this, for it was not to be expected that a War Office representative should run the risk of similar treatment a second time. Meanwhile, however, influenza got hold of me ; the medical attendant of the Spring-Rices and a United States senior medical officer looked after me, and decided that I must have change of air from the hotel ; they recommended a voyage to England by sea, and I asked the Emperor's permission, through Prince Vladimir Orlov, to postpone my audience to a later date ; this request was granted immediately.

Leaving my baggage in St. Petersburg I was informed, on arriving in England, that I was not to return to Russia at all, and a Medical Board at the War Office, having

declared me to be unfit, temporarily, for service, granted me three months' sick leave. On June 27th, King Edward sent for me, and, opening the audience with the words, "I have read the whole of the correspondence in your case," said he wished to ask me some questions. From what His Majesty told me it seemed that Hardinge had been very caustic about me—I was, and am still, unaware of his exact statements—but the King, when the matter had been threshed out between us, remarked: "I do not see what else you could have done, and think you behaved with great tact." Such words, coming from such a source, were, naturally, most gratifying, for I had been attacked behind my back by a diplomatist of the highest rank. In the army, if an officer be criticised, it is laid down that he must be informed of the aspersions; it was not always so: when I joined the Service a man's career was not infrequently wrecked by secret thrusts, the attacker being most friendly to his face.

King Edward, however, having told me the gist of Hardinge's diatribes, which His Majesty did not believe, they fell rather flat, but the ambassador, if discreet to me about them—except that he told me I had created an incident, and that *nobody* would approve of my conduct—thought it advisable to lift the veil of secrecy to a lady, one of my oldest and best friends in Russia, Princess Belosselsky, Skobelov's sister, a very odd proceeding. His Excellency did not, I suppose, at the time, think that I would see her again.

When I returned unexpectedly to St. Petersburg, on a flying visit, in October 1905, she told me that Hardinge had said to her I was entirely wrong in leaving Irkutsk, and that I ought to have informed him by telegram. What happened at Irkutsk has been recorded, also the despatch of my telegram to the British Ambassador. I have the receipt for this telegram, and saw my message in the embassy, as did Hardinge! Moreover, there had been ample time—a week—for a reply from St. Petersburg to have reached me between Irkutsk and Moscow, and I was greatly surprised not to receive one. It was therefore astonishing that Hardinge should have spoken as the

Princess said he did. Some men, however, like making confidences to members of the fair sex.

It will be seen later that the Russian Chief of the Staff at Mogilov, in 1916, uttered a tart remark about diplomats generally, when they had been worrying him. Some members of their profession think that every trouble can be settled by throwing overboard their own compatriots. In my case the story, as related by Princess Belosselsky, was spread all over St. Petersburg, but it made no impression on the Russians, who were accustomed to fables of this sort. There is a certain similarity in Hardinge's treatment of me and his subsequent procedure, when the Report on the campaign in Mesopotamia was issued : in each case he was first in the field.

I have anticipated events somewhat. There was another telegram, namely, one from General Oranovsky at Army Head-quarters in Manchuria, dated May 18th/31st. It must have reached the embassy before I sailed from St. Petersburg on June 14th, but not one word was said to me about it until eight weeks after its despatch, and then by the War Office, which had thought it had been already communicated to me by the ambassador.

Another odd thing was that Mr. Consul Woodhouse was in my ship, and he told me afterwards that Mr. (now Sir William) Tyrrell said the Foreign Office did not understand my return to England, to which Woodhouse replied that anybody had only to see me to learn my state of health ; the ambassador had been aware of the medical certificate.

This telegram stated that the authorities in Manchuria did not object to my return, but that, according to Birdin, I did not wish to go there ; there was also something about my papers. Naturally, Birdin, frightened at last, wanted to make out the best case he could, and was not likely to say anything to compromise himself. The ambassador, of course, had never, in the whole of his life, had to deal with people of the gendarme's standing. Nor would, I think, any impartial person have entertained the idea that I would have gone to the expense of a new outfit, and a lot of supplies for myself and Russian friends in Manchuria, merely to spend a month in travelling to Irkutsk and back !

A second tour of service in that region was not so interesting a prospect as that of 1904, because Gerard had already been taken ill—he died soon afterwards of pneumonia—so that I would have had to remain at Head-quarters, an inactive life, but I was very much better paid in Manchuria than when I was compiling my report in England. Oranovsky wished to shield his subordinate, but the sense of his telegram of May 18th/31st was entirely disproved by the Russian documentary evidence already in our possession.

Birdin was cunning: he knew, of course, the form of permit issued by the General Staff at St. Petersburg, and this gave him his opportunity. The original is with the papers in the case, but here is the translation: "The bearer, Colonel Waters of the English Service, is ordered by the British Government to the theatre of war. The General Staff has no objection to his proceeding to the Head-quarters of the Commander-in-Chief in the Field in the Far East."

The Russians had adopted this form so as not to tread unduly on the toes of any high authority concerned—in this case the Commander-in-Chief. He evidently had no objection to my return, otherwise Oranovsky would not have sent to Irkutsk, for my information, the telegram which the local commandant there mutilated and lied about. I wrote to the War Office commenting on the telegram of May 18th/31st, adding that, in view of the cruel and false attack on me, I begged to be allowed to return forthwith to Manchuria.

In reply I was told that Sir Charles Douglas, the Adjutant-General, thought I had better withdraw my somewhat intemperately worded letter, and write one more decorous, as the King's commands were that everything in the case was to be submitted to His Majesty. I knew, from the King himself, that he did not at all object to my previous frank language, but, of course, I conformed to the very kind hint. After despatching my revised version Sir Neville Lyttelton, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, saw me. Talking about the false Russian allegation he laughed and said: "What nonsense!" Moreover, he added that he would "do all I



can " to have me ordered back to Manchuria at once. This was just like that thorough gentleman.

The end of it was that the War Office was to arrange with the India Office for my return as their joint representative, subject to a Medical Board passing me. I was somewhat uneasy about this Board as, although I had always been a lightweight, influenza had taken ten pounds off me, so I equipped myself with heavy clothing—it was on August 10th—and very stout shooting boots, besides filling my pockets. These precautions were of no avail, for the Board, presided over by the late Sir William Babbie, V.C., ordered me to strip and then weighed me ! There was a good deal of hesitation, but they stretched a point and eventually passed me.

I then went off to the India Office, where they told me it would take " at least a fortnight " for the Secretary of State in Council to consider the War Office proposal, which I had looked upon as settled. I told the King of this, and he replied : " I am not in the least surprised ! " Mr. St. John Brodrick (now Lord Midleton) was the Secretary of State for India, and Lord Knollys wrote to him ; it was the first he had heard of the affair, but, with his usual energy and kindness, he made things hum, and the matter was quickly settled. All's well that ends well, and I was just on the point of leaving London in high spirits when I was told to stand fast pending the outcome of the peace negotiations ; they put an end to the war.

King Edward was leaving for Marienbad on August 14th, and sent for me on the previous day, when I told him about the delay in starting. He thought that, if peace came, I ought nevertheless to see the Emperor and tell him everything. His Majesty desired me to keep him informed of any fresh developments, and mentioned the recent meeting between Nicholas II and the German Emperor. He said he did not know what had passed between the two monarchs, nor who had proposed the visit; the Germans "swearing" it was the Russians and vice versa. "We shall never know," was his comment. I also saw Count Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador,

from whom I had received many kindnesses ; he was so disgusted at the manner in which I had been treated at Irkutsk that he said he could not speak of it. "It was so bad," he remarked.

After the King returned from Marienbad I was shown a letter, written to the War Office by His Majesty's command, stating that he considered it very important for me to see the Emperor ; I had had no communication, direct or indirect, with the King since the date of his departure for abroad. Arriving in St. Petersburg on October 2nd, it was arranged for me to have an audience on October 4th.

The Emperor and Empress were in residence at Peterhoff, and received me separately. The first thing His Majesty spoke about was my treatment at Irkutsk, and said he feared it would "leave a bad impression of Russia" on my mind, but he was resolved to have Birdin severely punished ; that individual had not reckoned that I would see his master any more than he ever would. I told the Emperor the whole story, adding that it was not worth while bothering about the gendarme, as my affection for Russia was too strong to be influenced by such a person. The Emperor replied : "But I must do something." He came round to my view, however. It would be affectation to say it was dictated by any regard for the rascal, whom I would have liked to have seen undergo the Russian punishment of degradation to the ranks, but I knew that, unless he were brought into the Imperial presence, nothing—as in some other cases—would happen to him, and the thing would be forgotten.

Meeting that great authority on Russia, Mackenzie Wallace, a few days later at Ballater station, he asked me about the affair ; on my telling him that the Emperor wanted to punish Birdin, but that I had said it was not worth while, Wallace remarked that nothing would have happened unless he had been marched into the Imperial courtyard.

After discussing the Irkutsk incident in all its bearings the Emperor told me to tell King Edward that he also entirely approved of my conduct—he would, indeed, have

written to my Sovereign, but this seemed unnecessary, as he had so many other things to do—and he turned then to a far more important subject, namely, the recent war. He was greatly dissatisfied not merely with the terms arranged, but also with the cessation of hostilities. His Majesty told me it had been impossible, in view of international opinion, to refuse President Roosevelt's invitation to open negotiations, but, knowing perfectly well the financial situation of his foe, he had always reckoned on a demand for an indemnity. This would never have been entertained by him, and he had calculated that the Peace Conference would break down on this point, and the struggle be continued until Japan could raise no more money. When she suddenly waived her demand the Emperor said it was a great disappointment to him.

The President had informed Japan that, unless she abandoned the indemnity claim, the whole world would say she was fighting merely for money. Nor could she have procured much more: discussing this question a week afterwards with Sir Ernest Cassel he told me that this was so, adding the words: "If they want more loans, except for purely pacific purposes, we will not let them have them." He slapped his pocket at these words, and I remarked what a delightful position it must be to be able to dictate such terms. He was, of course, quite right, for the power of the purse is demonstrating this daily.

After my audience with the Emperor I was taken to the Empress; she was not in bright spirits, and criticised Kouropatkin very severely indeed. I felt bound to expostulate, and said he had always been opposed to the war, that he did not wish to go to Manchuria, and, when he was despatched thither, it was long before he had the powers of a Commander-in-Chief; his situation had been, from first to last, one of extraordinary difficulty.

Her Majesty refused to be convinced, and remarked: "But I have heard about him from our own officers, who have returned from Manchuria."

"Yes, ma'am," I replied, "but those are the men who had been intriguing against him; one of them left his

troops in action because General Kouropatkin did not send him reinforcements."

There was a general—a former influential Guards officer of my acquaintance—who, after behaving in this unheard-of manner (he did not even ask for leave to go to Europe), was actually appointed, in that same year, 1905, an Inspector-General! Only in Russia could such things happen. The Empress, nevertheless, while not agreeing with one word of mine, did not take offence at my frankness, and, when our interview terminated, Her Majesty said she would send me a signed photograph of herself "with the son." The Emperor was similarly gracious about his own picture.

On the following day I started on my return to London, breaking my journey for a night at Berlin with my ever-faithful friend, Sir Frank Lascelles. Arrived in London on October 9th, I reported at once to Sir Charles Douglas; he was very pleasant: not having met him before I had heard that he was quite the reverse. On that same night, after dinner in the country, I received a telegram to proceed the next day to Balmoral. This very flattering command surprised me greatly, as I knew that the King was returning south in three days' time. His Majesty received me immediately after my arrival, and apologised at once for bringing me so far for a stay of only one night, but he was, he said, desirous of showing his appreciation of my conduct regarding the Irkutsk incident. My visit was, of course, announced in the Court Circular.

The King asked me how I had got on with Hardinge; my reply was that His Excellency had eyed me rather suspiciously at first, but was very affable when I made no allusion to the non-fulfilment of his prophecy that nobody would support me in the Irkutsk affair. His Majesty was pleased to remark that I had acted on this occasion also in the "most sensible" manner! But Hardinge had not finished with me, as will be seen presently.

The King took me for a long drive, and we discussed a lot of things; remarking that there was an entire absence of any precautions for his safety, he said: "Oh, nobody



but a lunatic would want to kill me." Talking about the Empress of Russia I mentioned that it was a thousand pities she had not allowed the Emperor to meet his people outside the Winter Palace in January 1905. "Yes," said His Majesty, "I am afraid her influence is not always a good one." Soon afterwards a distinguished officer, having read of my visit, said: "I want to go to Balmoral; how am I to manage it?" I explained that, as Balmoral was not my own house, I was afraid I could not help. Then I had the best drive of my life: the King took me with him in his carriage—four greys, postillions and outriders—to Ballater, and my journey to London was completed in the royal train. Certainly His Majesty complimented me far beyond my deserts, and, before leaving Balmoral, presented me with a walking-stick of wood grown on the estate with his monogram thereon. One would cheerfully go through much more than had fallen to my lot to gain the marked approval of such a Sovereign. Nor did his kindness stop here.

A little home-like incident may be mentioned: just as the King was about to enter the open landau he was handed a pair of woollen gloves; they were not those which he wanted, and he asked for his old ones. Unfortunately they had been packed up, and the luggage had already been sent on. His Majesty complained that it was very hard he could not have them, as everybody knew that he always liked to travel in them. Sitting next the King I felt almost semi-royal!

Hostile fangs, however, still had a firm grip of my person: just five months afterwards, in March 1906, an Honours List was issued for our officers, who had been in Manchuria, but my name was not mentioned. A curious point about this was that Major-General Burnett, who had been unemployed for some years, was sent to the army of our ally after fighting had ceased, and he was rewarded by the Knight Commandership of the Bath.

I learned afterwards, from what may be termed the very best source, that the War Office had put forward my name for a K.C.M.G., an order of knighthood in which the Foreign Office has a say. Sir Charles Hardinge, who had

become the virtual ruler of that Department, that is to say, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, took exception to this recommendation. The Foreign Office said that an honour of this nature was only given to those who held independent posts. Certainly my position as the sole representative of the War Office, and chief of the Mission after Gerard's death, was quite as independent as that of a Minister to some minor Power. Moreover, the Foreign Office pointed out, the C.M.G. had already been conferred upon me in the Birthday Honours List of November 9th, 1904, for my services.

This was a "terminological inexactitude." The Foreign Office had nominated me for a C.M.G. in the *Birthday Gazette* of November 1904, in recognition of my services as "military attaché at St. Petersburg (1893-8) and Berlin (1900-3)," quite a different matter. As regards the 1906 Honours the War Office—as I learned later—faced with the Foreign Office objection, consulted General Grierson, the Chief of the Military Operations Department, as my work in Manchuria had been associated more particularly with his branch.

Everybody has his weak point, and Grierson's was military rewards: he had not then been knighted. When King Edward received me after my return from the campaign of 1904, Grierson happened to see me on the following day, and asked, at once, whether His Majesty had knighted me. When the War Office referred to him about my proposed K.C.M.G., he replied that he did not recommend me for the honour. The Foreign Office had a good bite at me.

All this was, of course, unknown to me at the time, but Grierson met me soon after I had heard the whole story. He took my arm in a very friendly way, so I mentioned a letter he had written, some little time previously, about my work in Manchuria, adding that he had since given me a hearty stab in the back. My shell was effective: he literally jumped and said: "Well, you can't quote that letter."

Jekyll and Hyde occur in real life: this letter of Grierson's, the mention of which had caused him to jump, was

given to me ; it is in his own handwriting throughout, and states that I had " seen and done more than any other of our officers at the seat of war, on either side, and I trust he will have his reward."

When I took leave of King Edward, before starting for North China in 1906, His Majesty, referring to the subject, told me that my knighthood would not be long delayed. We were, however, not to meet again, for he died before my return, and my military stock went down to zero. Bitter resentment had been caused when my retirement in 1904 had been cancelled, although, of course, I had had no hand in that affair ; this resentment was not, however, visible to the naked eye at the time ; after rejoining the army, some of those high officers, who had said they knew nothing about my prospects, congratulated me apparently whole-heartedly : " I knew you would be all right," and that sort of thing. My reinstatement had been, of course, a matter between the Sovereign and the Secretary of State, Mr. Arnold-Forster.

After the Russo-Japanese War a member of the War Office told me that Mr. Arnold-Forster had wished me to write the official history of that campaign, but was informed that the task did not appeal to me, as it was not of sufficient importance for my rank of full colonel, and so the matter dropped. Had the offer been made to me I would have accepted with alacrity ! Evidently somebody in the War Office was afraid lest the work might bring me into too close contact with the Secretary of State, himself an historian and author of that delightful book, *A History of England*.

He wished to see me after my return from Manchuria and, among other things, asked me some questions about field artillery in action, of which, at that time, I had seen more than any other British officer. It appeared that his opinion agreed with mine and, in telling me that his experts opposed him, he added : " I do not see why the opinion of a civilian on certain questions should not be as good as that of a soldier." More than once events have shown it to be a great deal better.

These facts have been mentioned because they show

the action of wheels within wheels in the public service. Some eminent and impartial men were very frank about my treatment. Sir George Clarke (now Lord Sydenham) was Secretary to the Defence Committee (which he had really brought into being) when he wrote that it was "cruel"; it certainly was a slap in the face in front of the whole army. Sir Thomas Kelly-Kenny, who had been Adjutant-General, wrote, before I was publicly insulted, that I was sure to have my choice between a post at the War Office and one with troops, advising me to select the latter. Sir Arthur Davidson, Assistant Private Secretary to King Edward, said in one letter that I had been very badly treated, and in another: "It seems such a pity that all that invaluable experience in the Russo-Japanese War should be wasted or, rather, lost." Sir Cecil Clementi-Smith, who had refused the appointment of Minister at Peking, was frank, and wrote that my treatment had been "scandalous." After all, these men were competent to form an opinion, because they knew my work.

The fact is that, although by Grierson's own letter I had fully justified my reinstatement in the Army in 1904, this had created jealousy in some quarters, whereas there was really plenty of room for everybody. At any rate I bumped the scale very heavily in the wrong direction!



## CHAPTER XVII

NOBODY on either side had such opportunities as fell to me in Manchuria and, in 1905, in my report on the campaign, my conviction was stated that we could, at ridiculously trifling cost, find all the men needed immediately in the event of war involving us in Europe. I had reported previously from Berlin, between 1900 and 1903, that a crash on the Continent was a question of a short time only, but the Anglo-French *Entente*, backed by the military authorities to the utmost of their power, certainly seemed to me to advance the date of the catastrophe.

My scheme, founded on my recent experiences, was adumbrated in my report on the war, and detailed in a separate communication to the War Office. I said that the foreign recruit is considered an efficient soldier after a few months' service, while the reservist is considered efficient after a few days' training. The Russian "reserve" formations in Manchuria proved themselves at least the equals of the "regular" units, although, on mobilisation, they expanded sometimes in the ratio of 37 to 1.

My point was that—bearing in mind the superior intelligence of the people of this country—where any foreigner had to be trained for months, weeks or days, "it is safe to say that weeks may be substituted for months, and hours for days." All that we needed, therefore, was to pass men rapidly, for two or three months, through the ranks of the non-regular units; even a shorter period might suffice to teach men to march, shoot and obey, while experience on service would do the rest. The cost would have been negligible, and great numbers would soon have been available, because our people would join for a very brief period when they will not do so for a longer one.

The system could be applied to-day; the Territorial Army will, otherwise, always be under its establishment, if we cling to the old-fashioned type of army, instead of concentrating on aircraft, submarines and chemical products.

Soon afterwards the announcement was made about the formation of the Territorial Army; it would have been a delight to me to have helped in bringing it into being, and it is within the bounds of possibility that my very short service plan might have been adopted. Instead of this, however, it was decided that enlistment should be for four years, our leading military authorities declaring that you could not make an efficient regular soldier in less than two, or a territorial in less than four years.

To anybody conversant with our people, town or country, it was certain that the term of enlistment was far too long, and that the new force could never be recruited to anything like its authorised establishment. When the crash did come, in 1914, my scheme, put forward nine years previously, was adopted in hot haste with all the difficulties inevitably involved thereby.

Shortly after the birth of the Territorial Army I was appointed, in 1906, to command our troops of occupation in North China, a most interesting post, but leading, as I was to learn, nowhere.

For some time past we have heard a good deal about the Chinese demand that foreigners should no longer enjoy extra-territorial privileges in their country, and it is often said that it is the outcome of Bolshevist agitation. This question was, however, already exercising the minds of the Chinese, among them the Viceroy and future President, Yuan-Shi-Kai, in December 1906, when he spoke to me about it, while post-war events have rendered it far more acute. I reported the matter at the time. When I was in China it was evident that Russia was still intensely interested in the northern portion of that empire, and at least one English local newspaper was heavily subsidised by her. The Russian, who made the payments, told me this himself, another instance of political wheels within wheels.

Count Rex was the German Minister at Peking during and after my time. He was an old acquaintance of St. Petersburg days, and very glad to see me ; the diplomatic body in China was not altogether like that to which he had been accustomed in Europe ; he had an excellent cook and first-class wines always at my disposal. The place was uncongenial to him, and he was much exercised about the Revolution which was expected to break out after the death of the Dowager Empress ; he always said that he would quit his post at the first sign of disorder. I wonder whether he did ?

China was extremely interesting, and the Chinese, of all grades, delightful people with whom to deal : once a bargain was made one could rely upon its being carried out, whether it was the Viceroy or a coolie who was concerned. The Dowager Empress died before my departure in 1910, and great events were obviously impending ; they did not, however, seem to interest the War Office, as nobody there wished to see me on my return. Sir Cecil Clementi-Smith, a great authority on Oriental affairs, wrote to me that he was not surprised ; he had a dry wit.

When I went to China there was a good deal of talk about the staff at the War Office being more " brainy " than ever before. My wife was to follow me and, when applying for her passage, wrote that she had one son ; thereupon she was told to give the sex of her child, so she could think only of the following explanation : " one son, a BOY " ; this met the case fortunately.

Something caused me to remind the War Office once that navigation from Taku to Tientsin was blocked by ice from about December until March. Shortly after the Department concerned had received this notification, a cablegram reached me saying that the Cameron Highlanders would reach Tientsin on January 8th ; referring to my previous communication I replied that this would be impossible, but they were, nevertheless, duly despatched, and had to wait at Hong-Kong until April in consequence ; the victorious career of the staff officer concerned was accelerated, I suppose, by this master-stroke.

Almost immediately after my return from China, in

1910, I retired for the second time, regretting somewhat having thrown away my prospects in civil life in 1904, but one cannot have everything. Other interests occupied me, and time passed uneventfully until 1914, except that I was gathered up for the Coronation festivities of King George, when it was very pleasant to meet many old friends, foreign and other.



## CHAPTER XVIII

ABOUT a year before the Great War broke out, Colonel Repington, one of the most influential supporters of the *isolation of Germany* policy, wrote an article bearing on the subject. It declared his conviction and, no doubt, the belief of many of his readers, that the German Army—perfectly machine-like on parade—could not endure a campaign for more than a few months. Sir John French, Grierson, and others of great influence shared this view: their personal prejudices and ambitions had blinded them to facts.

We were to keep the seas—a sufficiently large task in itself—and also furnish a small army of, perhaps, one hundred and fifty thousand men, of whom a considerable proportion must of necessity be non-combatants. Thus equipped, the French guaranteed to twist off the German tail perhaps in three, but surely in six, months. I could not resist writing a letter to the War Office combating this view, but, of course, no notice was taken of it. In no case has a Republic been ready for war, however desirous it may have been to complete its preparations beforehand; in view of human nature it is not possible, for a Latin Republic, at any rate, to ensure that its funds, if sufficient in themselves, will be expended entirely for the purpose for which they have been collected from the taxpayer.

The political atmosphere was becoming more and more sultry everywhere as 1914 progressed. When war was declared there was, at first, no place for me in the expected walk-over, so I gave a few lectures in the country to try and explain something about the situation, and its latent perils for our population at home. It was the custom for the agricultural labourer always to eat only fresh bread; what he did not require he threw away. At one meeting I

urged the need for stopping waste, as food was bound to become scarce before the end of the struggle. A labourer got up and said the newspapers stated that Germany would soon be defeated, and that, meanwhile, they should continue "Business as usual." I also told my hearers that we would require not one new army but ten new armies, an estimate which proved to be woefully under the mark. My audiences naturally did not believe me.

About a month after the outbreak, Sir Reginald Brade, the Secretary to the War Office, asked me to join the Press Bureau, which, he said, required strengthening. Glad to do anything to help in what I realised was a life-and-death struggle I complied at once with the request. Mr. F. E. Smith (now Lord Birkenhead) was its chief, but his temperament required something more exciting, and he set out soon for service in the field in France. Lord Buckmaster succeeded him, but my stay was a short one: the whole thing was too pitifully hopeless as, indeed, it was bound to be. The Bureau, staffed as it was by men of great ability in many ways, who were, however, not equipped to deal with the unceasing flow of military problems as they arose, could only be, as it was from the outset, a very disjointed machine indeed.

At times it was difficult or, rather, impossible to grasp the reason for publishing or for withholding this or that piece of news. The general practice was to withhold everything, while at other times false information would be broadcasted. An instance of each kind will illustrate my meaning. Lord Jellicoe's father died. He had been, I believe, the Commodore of the Royal Mail Steamship Company, but the Press was not permitted, at first, to announce the death. The reason was certainly an odd one: it was supposed that the Germans might confuse father and son, and think it was the Commander-in-Chief who had departed this life. Surely this would have emboldened their fleet to come out and fight, as they must have assumed that Lord Jellicoe was our best admiral!

At the Battle of the Marne we took some corps artillery, that is to say, batteries allotted to corps commanders, but the Press Bureau was made to say that we had captured

the whole of the guns belonging to an army corps, a very different thing. The root idea of all this sort of thing was not complimentary to the British people, the clear implication being that only an official and very small minority of us had much heart for the struggle.

After hesitating between the command of a German prison camp and a staff appointment at Devonport, I chose the latter, but was there for a few weeks only, being nominated to raise and command the 93rd Infantry Brigade with Head-quarters at Gravesend. Portions of it were already in existence, when I joined in December 1914, and I was fortunate enough to find there some old comrades of China days in both the commissioned and non-commissioned ranks.

Every grade of society was represented, and many were children of anything over fourteen years of age. On arrival my first question was about the discipline, and it appeared the only "crime" was absence without leave. This was, of course, serious in view of the adoption of my nine-year-old plan of brief, intensive training. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, and nobody had appreciated the blessings of leave better than myself. But it was forbidden. I solved the problem by arranging for a special leave train to be run every Saturday at midday from Gravesend to London—whence came most of my boys—returning late on Sunday night. The effect was instantaneous, for the absences dropped practically to zero, and everybody was pleased and hard-working.

In the spring of 1915 we were turned into a "reserve" brigade to find recruits for units in the field. This did not surprise me, for it had been, from the beginning, obvious that the various "New Armies" could not take the field as such, because some of their commanders were senior to all others in France, except Sir John French, who was a Field-Marshal. In addition to military training, my troops were ordered to erect great numbers of field works for the defence of London, although it was certain that the metropolis would stand a poor chance if Fritz once succeeded in getting so close to it.

These works extended over a large area, and it happened

once or twice that, returning in the dark from inspecting some of them, my car was held up by zealous special constables, whose ideas as to my identity, passes and uniform were very rudimentary. Every motor-car was suspected of conveying spies, but these little troubles were all arranged in a satisfactory manner after some argument.

The late spring of 1915 found us at Colchester, where I saw my second Zeppelin, homeward bound and out of ammunition: it had been to London, and a wretched sentry got into sad trouble for firing at it. My first Zeppelin had been the original one, launched on Lake Constance in 1900. Many people in authority seemed to be undergoing an attack of nerves, and others suffered in consequence: at one place I was a "competent military authority," armed with all sorts of dreadful powers, and a crowd of ordinary persons were watching a Zeppelin, sailing very high overhead. A newly appointed magistrate, a very unpopular individual, struck a match to light his pipe, and was at once pounced upon by the police. They refused to pay any attention to his indignant remonstrances about arresting a magistrate—his wretched match could not have caused the slightest danger. The case was referred to me, who, hearing that the offender was a very pestilential fellow, told the civil authorities to do their worst on him!

In the autumn of 1915 my force was transferred to Shoreham, near Brighton. This was a very agreeable change, because I was, for some time, the senior officer there, the district extending from Littlehampton to Brighton. It was one of those districts which were least likely to be attacked, at any rate by anything exceeding a handful of men. Somehow or another, the authorities thought that the Brighton region was a very tempting bait, in spite of the shallow water and other obstacles, so the magnificent pier was mined, ready to be blown up the instant that the signal should be given by me! What a responsibility! The little coasting harbour at Shoreham was also prepared for demolition, but, supposing an invader to come in force, which he would not have been so foolish as to do, explosions of this kind at those places would have



been pure Vandalism, so I resolved at once to resist any temptation to "press the button."

Fritz never did appear, in my time, at least, but there were one or two scares, which came from London. I had succeeded in selecting my own staff, and an excellent one it was, its principal member being Major St. John Graham, a yeomanry officer, ignorant, before 1914, of all that kind of work, but who had served in the South African War. I have never known a more competent and loyal staff officer, and he took good care to select, as his subordinates, men whom he was satisfied were thoroughly efficient, and who soon learned their work. Graham was afterwards on the Head-quarters Staff in France, so my choice was justified.

When Sir John French was raised to the peerage, and withdrawn from the seat of war, he commanded everything in this country. On taking office in London he issued orders for me to submit a scheme of defence for my area in the event of an invasion. This had, of course, been done as soon as I arrived at Shoreham, and was kept up to date as new troops came to me. I sent in a copy of my latest effort, and, in reply, was asked what I intended to do with my fourteen thousand men at Portslade, a mile or two distant. My answer was that I regretted not having made arrangements about Portslade because a perusal of my scheme would show that no troops were there. I enquired also whether my plans were approved, but never received any reply. Certainly there was some curious staff work even in those days.

After I went to Shoreham there was some trouble about the military prison at Lewes which was then added to my command, so I went to see it. Originally intended for quite a small number of badly behaved soldiers, it was literally crammed to overflowing, and the prisoners had to be exercised in batches. Every description of man was there, from all parts of the globe and of all ages. Interviewing every one of them separately, it was evident that over 90 per cent. should be where they wanted to be, namely, in the field. Numbers of men had been sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour for as much as one and

two years, while their offences were really most trivial. I succeeded in getting most of the culprits released, but I heard afterwards in London that some of the generals, who had confirmed the sentences and were much senior to me, were quite angry when they heard of what had been done.

Soon after Lord French took up his new appointment, commanders were asked to put forward any suggestions which occurred to them regarding economy. I never heard of anybody proposing that his own appointment should be abolished but, as we had too many senior officers, one of my suggestions was that some of us, including myself, should be relieved of our posts. Another of my schemes was that the practice should cease of drafting men, who were obviously quite unfit even for home service, into the ranks. From statistics, which I compiled at Shoreham, it was clear that, by the commencement of 1916, eleven or twelve millions were being literally thrown away annually for purely negative results; perhaps this was not much, but it represents about 5 per cent. on two hundred millions, and every little helps.

The net result of my economic proposals was that I was taken at my word and relegated again to the military dust-heap, but I had seen some good work done by my staff before this event took place. On the outbreak of the war a gallant youngster, Denis Shuttleworth, who had been for a time a subaltern in the York and Lancaster regiment, enlisted as a despatch rider and went to France. He was thrown away on that kind of work, and I got hold of him, gave him a commission, and put him in charge of the newly appointed officers, who were arriving in shoals at Gravesend. Their numbers increased enormously as time went on, and it was entirely Shuttleworth's idea to form them into companies. This system was taken up by the War Office and applied generally with admirable results; his reward was the satisfaction of having done his best.

In another case great sums were saved by another member of my staff, whose name also is Graham. He had never served before the war, but was—and still is—

the head of one of the greatest British firms in Portugal. One would have thought that a man of his special qualifications would have been sent with our Military Mission to Portugal, which he knows inside out, but his services there were declined. I was fortunate enough to hear of him, gave him a commission and took him on my staff. It was not long before he devised a plan—entirely the product of his own fertile brain—for dealing with the refuse from the cooking-pots and kitchens of the troops. Commencing on a small scale the scheme was so successful, from a pecuniary point of view, that it was adopted all over the country, and was a fine source of income to the War Office, besides having other advantages. Had he been a pushing politician the swelling receipts from the fats would probably have hoisted him into the House of Lords.

My enforced retirement was not exactly a cause for unqualified regret. My only child had gone from Repton to Germany, at the age of fifteen, in the spring of 1914; he had no desire to enter the Army, and was to go into business, where he had an unusually good opening. When the German Army was ordered to mobilise his kind friends—Germans—sent him home, and he managed to get through in the nick of time, so I was able to see more of him, after leaving Shoreham, than would otherwise have been possible. The Germans, one and all, including generals and others about to take the field, were extraordinarily kind to him to the very end. They had been throughout; he was living at St. Avold in Lorraine, where the garrison had recently been increased; being so close to the French frontier aeroplanes were much in evidence, and our boy, being already an enthusiast in this line—he had flown in a rickety machine when thirteen years old—was allowed free access to them and everything else.

Some reference to the alleged passing of Russian Army Corps through this country on their way to France, in the early stage of the war, may be permitted. As everybody knows, the evidence was overwhelmingly definite; for instance, a young girl, in a village near my home,

was engaged to a porter at Newcastle. She did not claim to have seen a single Russian anywhere, but her betrothed had seen thousands; he knew they were Muscovites because they were attired in strange-looking uniforms and, when he opened the doors of some of their carriages, in August 1914, he saw the snow on their boots! All the other evidence was similar: it was always some friend who had seen them; a prominent city father of Luton was told by the station-master at St. Pancras that breakfast for twenty thousand Russians was ordered for a certain date.

The wish was father to the thought; in view of the enormous man-power of Russia it was natural for the Allies to ask for the loan of a considerable force. Count Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador, was talking about it to me in August 1914, and said his country was not in a position to render any assistance in Western Europe, at any rate not until it was known what line Turkey intended to take; if she should enter into the struggle, then Russia would require all her available forces for herself. Some people, however, are ultra-suspicious: mentioning this absolutely sound argument to somebody, I was met with the reply: "Of course the ambassador would not have told you the truth!"

When relieved of my command at Shoreham in the early summer of 1916, the idea that I should see Russia again never entered my head.



## CHAPTER XIX

NEVERTHELESS, the most unexpected things happen. After spending a short time at home it occurred to me to ask Sir William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, whether he could find some work for me to do, suggesting a military attachéship—the number of these posts had been largely increased since 1914. There was nothing of this kind available, but he wished me to look after a Russian Military Mission, which was due to arrive in England shortly ; it was to be accompanied by a Financial Mission.

This was an astonishingly pleasant surprise. The chief of the Military Mission was General Byelyaev, the head of the General Staff at Petrograd, while the conduct of operations in the field was in the hands of General Alexyeev, whose titular head was the Emperor. Alexyeev was no relation of Admiral Alexyeev, formerly Viceroy in Manchuria, but had served there during the Russo-Japanese War. Mr. Bark, the Minister of Finance, was in charge of the Financial Mission.

Before the Missions arrived at Newcastle Robertson told me they were going first to Paris, whither I was to accompany them, returning to England to discuss munitions and finance. Ours was practically the only country which had any credit in the United States, the only possible lender. Altogether the prospect was most inviting. It was enhanced by the news that, on completion of their labours, the Missions were to take me back to Russia with them, temporarily at any rate. Robertson was, of course, the originator of the whole scheme, and my most grateful thanks are due to him.

Mr. Lloyd George was Minister of Munitions when General Byelyaev's and Mr. Bark's parties reached London.

That distinguished statesman had grasped the situation to an extraordinary degree ; by this it is not meant that his predecessors had not done a vast amount of spade work, of which the results would necessarily take some time to mature. But Lloyd George's vision may be gauged from the following fact : on taking up his duties he—entirely ignorant of artillery matters—drew up such a large programme for munitions that some of his military experts told him no war could possibly last long enough for these to be consumed. He stood firm, however, and found, before long, that his own plans had enormously under-estimated the requirements !

The embarking orders and arrangements at Folkestone were not exactly what they should have been for such highly placed allies, whose arrival there had, of course, been communicated to the local authorities, but any deficiency in these respects was more than made good when we reached Boulogne. The local commandant, a Guard of Honour, and the *Marseillaise* greeted the Russian General, while *God save the King* was played for my humble self.

Digressing for a moment there was a sequel to this undeserved honour : some time after the war I went to France as a purely private individual. There was a great crowd of passengers, and the French landing officer, a civilian, was like a good many other petty republican officials anywhere : after keeping us waiting a long time he commenced operations, and was very offensive even to his own countrywomen. One of them, almost exhausted, was browbeaten, and, just as he was stamping her passport—she was standing immediately in front of me—my wandering thoughts made me laugh. At once the little despot turned on me and demanded : “ Why do you laugh ? ” He glared at me, and visions of a French *cachot* floated before my mind as I replied very politely : “ It is merely the contrast between this visit and my last one, when I was received by a Guard of Honour and a band playing my National Anthem.” He changed colour, got rid of the girl, saw my old official passport, attached to the new one, and was most polite. He was, perhaps, uneasy lest his behaviour should be reported.

In Paris, in July 1916, we were all the guests of the French Republic at the Hôtel de Crillon, the last word in hotel life. Right well did those past-masters in the art of entertaining, the French, take care of us. My time there was very pleasant, as it was my own except for luncheon- and dinner-parties, while the Russians were engaged in all kinds of conferences. Among other people there was then in Paris the military correspondent of *The Times*, Colonel Repington. Towards the end of 1915 he had written that, by about the end of February or so, 1916, the Germans must be crushed, as they would have no more young men of the military age left for the ranks. He had forgotten those who were growing up.

Hearing of my arrival in the French capital Repington came to see me—I had known him for years—and propounded a scheme. The Roumanian Minister in Paris had, he said, authorised him to ask me to use my influence with General Byelyaev to induce Russia to persuade Roumania to throw in her lot with the Allies. These were to provide her with an adequate supply of munitions, on receipt of which she would give the usual guarantee, namely, to finish the war within three months.

I had heard that sort of thing before, so was not impressed; besides, I asked Repington, what have the Roumanian officials done with the enormous sums extracted for years from the taxpayers? In addition I had to explain that my influence was nil, adding that, for my part, it seemed far preferable for Russia to have her left flank covered by a neutral country, especially as there was then nothing to show that the Roumanians were the men they said they were.

Repington was, however, insistent: if I could not, or would not, help Roumania in her altruistic project would I introduce him to Byelyaev? This was, of course, easily arranged, the Russian Chief of the Staff having been warned of Repington's wish. He was received in the most friendly manner, but, somehow, not getting any opportunity of expounding his views, presently took his leave. It interested me to read in Repington's work, *The First World War*, what he said about his interview; it was

very brief: he said he called upon Byelyaev but, not finding him interesting, soon departed. He did not mention the Roumanian plan, for which Byelyaev had the strongest distaste, like many of his compatriots in high positions, and Repington may have thought, when the guarantee turned out to be a huge liability, that it would be better not to mention his reason for interviewing the Chief of the Staff.

On one occasion we drove to Haig's advanced Headquarters near Doullens, returning to Paris the same evening. The Mission was anxious to see some heavy artillery in action; this wish had been communicated to the Field-Marshal, but, on arriving, we learned that the nearest emplacements were nine miles distant, besides which things appeared to be quiet. In any case the time was too short, so the visit resolved itself into lunching with Sir Douglas, who very kindly invited me also but, his space being so limited, it seemed more tactful to lunch with some of the staff. The French General, attached to the Mission during its stay in France, was naturally hurt because he did not receive an invitation; somebody had blundered.

My acquaintance with Lord Bertie, our very able ambassador in Paris, dated from many years back when he was occupying a high position in the Foreign Office; he had a rich vocabulary and a great sense of humour, but there were several British individuals in Paris at this time, July 1916, each of whom left it to be inferred that *he* was the real ambassador, Bertie being merely an ornamental figurehead. These gentlemen did not know their Bertie!

He told me that, from September 1914 until April 1915, he was left without a military attaché, in spite of his repeated requests for one. He also said he had criticised War Office methods once to the late Lord Salisbury, who replied: "Their bowels are full of red tape!"

When affairs in Paris had been settled our next objective was La Panne, in order that General Byelyaev might meet the King of the Belgians; after a brief stay there the Mission hastened back to England, where the most



important work remained to be done. I had the honour of presenting the military members to His Majesty, and the Treasury Conferences commenced forthwith, all the Allies being represented in great force. Mr. Lloyd George had, meanwhile, become Secretary of State for War, and M. Albert Thomas, the French Minister of Munitions, had also come to England.

My party was lodged at the Ritz ; there were several other guests of the Government in London, among them a certain minor Mission. One day the manager of their hotel, M. Dreyfus, asked me how much longer its members proposed to stay. Having nothing to do with them my ignorance was complete, and then the manager poured his grievances into my ear. It seemed that the four gentlemen had run up a bill for some £600 during a period of a few weeks, and had set their rooms on fire three times ; fortunately the fire brigade had been very prompt and efficient. M. Dreyfus was getting anxious about a settlement, but the problem solved itself soon afterwards by the departure of the Mission.

A great luncheon was offered to all those attending the Conferences ; it was given at Lancaster House, and many were the attempts of some uninvited individuals to procure cards. The real work was, of course, intensely interesting, for the two problems of finance and the supply of munitions were mutually interdependent. Mr. Reginald McKenna, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, presided, and fortunate it was for this country that she was represented by a man of such extraordinary financial skill and vision. Other prominent public servants were Mr. Montagu, Minister of Munitions, Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Lord Reading, and Lord Cunliffe, the Governor of the Bank of England.

Our Allies were truly a body formidable not only in numbers but in their requirements, and evidently imagined that the British purse was bottomless. Some Englishmen had declared that our pre-war Budget, amounting to about two hundred millions, would break our back, yet here was McKenna, as vigilant a guardian of our means as it was possible to find, paying three hundred millions each

to France and Russia, in cash or kind yearly, to say nothing of Italy and other peoples, while Roumania was still bargaining about payment for her proposed altruism.

M. Ribot, a man of great age and French Minister of Finance, was in sore straits: he had been endeavouring to raise a Government loan of a hundred million dollars in the United States, but things had not gone according to plan. We had been borrowing there at 5 per cent, and any patriotic Frenchman would, of course, consider it an indignity if his nation were asked to pay more, but those idealistic Americans were also very practical men, and had suggested a higher rate. Thus the negotiations had proceeded until 7, or  $7\frac{1}{2}$ , per cent was demanded, while, to make matters worse, those grasping New Yorkers declared that, if this offer were not accepted, Ribot would have to pay considerably more.

Lord Cunliffe advised him to close at once, but Ribot—he became Prime Minister again in 1917—had another idea, which was for England to float a new loan in the States. This notion was very quickly crushed by Lord Reading, who described the extraordinarily hostile attitude of many influential Americans during his recent visit to their country. In fact, he said, if Congress had been sitting, his Mission might easily have been asked to leave. There was therefore nothing for Ribot to do but to make the best terms he could, and Mr. McKenna, wishing to put some heart into him—France had far more gold than we had, and was sitting on it—remarked: “If I could borrow one thousand millions now at 7 per cent I would do it.” Ribot thereupon wept!

Mr. Bark, the Russian Finance Minister, had brought with him a general officer, Mikhelson, who, having been badly wounded, had been nominated to look after the foreign exchanges! This was thoroughly Russian, and comment is needless. He was a very nice man but, so little was he fitted for his new position, that he literally would not credit my assurance, until it was confirmed elsewhere, that the Bank of England is a public company like any other business undertaking; yet he was supposed to be able to stabilise the rouble.

As all the Allies depended entirely on British cash and credit our situation was indeed one of horrible difficulty, and the understanding was that all orders intended for the other Allies should pass through our hands, seeing that the creditors looked to England for payment. It transpired, nevertheless, that somebody in Russia had placed an order, on his own initiative and without consulting London, for one hundred thousand tons of American steel rails. Mr. McKenna pointed out that there was already more steel on order than would be in sight during the next two years, and Mr. Montagu emphasised the rail question by stating that he could have placed the order for £2 per ton less !

The Chancellor was exceedingly polite to everybody, but also frank : he declared that he would recognise no orders except those sanctioned by our authorities. This pronouncement was evidently not at all palatable to some of his visitors, but, thank God, he knows how to be firm. He explained to the Allies that, on every order placed by us in the United States, he had to pay 10 per cent cash down in advance ; in fact we were treated as being possible defaulters. This system, inevitable as it was, had very serious consequences at times, because 10 per cent on huge orders meant that some American firms found it highly profitable to delay carrying out their contracts, and to perform other work instead. They were easy winners without turning a lathe.

As time passed the pound sterling began to get worse with regard to the dollar, and Mr. McKenna had only a very small supply of gold, something under ninety millions. He executed an indisputably great stroke of genius, one which not one man in a million would have dared to attempt. Pestered on all sides for more money at home and abroad he decided to ship a million or so to New York, following this shipment by another similar one. He then received a hint that the Wall Street financiers quite understood and sympathised with the difficulties of his position, and he need not trouble to send any more of the precious metal.

The Chancellor replied by shipping more gold. This

elicited a plain request to keep the rest for his own wants. Another shipment was despatched, when McKenna was implored not to transmit another sovereign, and the sterling exchange, which had commenced to improve with the first million, behaved most satisfactorily. Mr. McKenna told me: "I thought I would bring them to heel." When the pound began to fall in value, the day to day rate for money in New York was about 10 per cent, and the Chancellor's magnificent bravery reduced this to 3 per cent or less, which Wall Street did not like at all! It was a wonderful stroke of business, and shows how he understands human nature as well as finance. The American financiers thought that he had some huge secret hoard. This was one of the finest things done during the whole of the war.

Lord Curzon of Kedleston was not always very happy in his remarks: everybody else here, who had met him, was delighted with General Byelyaev, a gentleman of perfect integrity, who had reduced his requirements to the minimum, and had his facts clearly tabulated for all to understand. On one occasion, after reading out a list of stores, to which neither Mr. McKenna nor Mr. Montagu took any exception, Lord Curzon got up and said he would require Byelyaev's statements to be "corroborated" before he could agree to them! I shivered and looked at Byelyaev out of the corner of my eye—we were quite close to one another—and he sensed that he had been criticised, for he glanced sharply at the speaker. Fortunately he did not understand our language, or there would have been trouble. Of course, Lord Curzon had not meant to be anything but most polite; nevertheless, the act does not always quite correspond with the intention.

The Allies also had to attend to matters other than financial. There were conferences at the War Office, heavy artillery being the principal subject discussed. In spite of the stupendous exertions of this country the output was still, in July 1916, much below what was aimed at. Our new factories were mostly in being, and some of them working, but time was required before everybody could be satisfied. M. Albert Thomas had a brilliant



idea, namely, to pool, for the time being at any rate, all medium-heavy and heavy guns in France. If Mr. Lloyd George had consented, the French statisticians might have made it appear that we should hand over most of our weapons. The Secretary of State said he could not agree to this proposal, certainly not without the full concurrence of our Commander-in-Chief in France, who was himself short of these guns.

Thomas then brought up his last reserves with the fiery eloquence of which he was master. He began by saying that the ultimate decision must, of course, remain in the hands of Mr. Lloyd George, *le maître des maîtres*. Thomas was seated at the end of the table away from the Minister, on whose right hand was my humble self. "What's that?" enquired Mr. Lloyd George, who had caught a word he knew, but he did not profess to be at home in the French language.

"He says, sir, that the decision rests with you, who are the Lord of Lords." It was delightful to see the twinkle in his eye on hearing this truthful rendering. Thomas then went on: "Tell His Excellency that, when this war broke out, there was not in France one single medium-heavy or heavy land gun. We have taken as many as can be spared out of ships, but of land guns there was not one."

Truly this was an astounding piece of news: the whole world knew of the gigantic French military expenditure since 1871. As soon as I had translated Thomas's words I added, in a whisper: "Ask him, sir, what the politicians in France have done with the taxpayers' money to bring us all to this pass."

"You ask him," whispered the Secretary of State, his eyes twinkling like Sirius.

"I am only a common underling here; I daren't."

"No more dare I," he replied, but he would, I think, have enjoyed putting the query.

So far as my experience went Mr. Lloyd George had a charming personality and, apart from his wonderful driving energy, his view of Easterner versus Westerner seemed to me to be sound. Prior to 1914 the Germans

had not troubled themselves about real trenches in field warfare, but they had not neglected the study of them. The Russo-Japanese struggle had taught them that real field fortifications, held by brave and disciplined troops, would exercise an enormous influence. I saw, at the battle of Liaoyan, some of the Russian trenches, many feet deep, full of dead and wounded Russians and Japanese, and the German agent, Lauenstein, had sent exact descriptions of these works to Berlin. When the time came, his countrymen put up impregnable lines of them, and it seemed to me certain, from the commencement, that attempts to beat Germany in the west could only end in disastrous losses in men. And this was the case; we kept on striving after the impossible. Of course, when America came in, and placed a huge army of magnificent physique in the field, which refused much trench work, these German defences could have been taken, but, at the time of which I am writing, it was dreadful to read of these heroic efforts, which were foredoomed to failure over and over again.

Mention of that wonderful man, Mr. Lloyd George, leads naturally to a remark about the then Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith (now Lord Oxford and Asquith). He wished to see me before my departure for Russia in 1916; it had been a very usual remark that he was unable to grasp the awful seriousness of the situation, but my interview with him convinced me that he realised it far better than a very great many other prominent people, soldiers or civilians. He was bitterly assailed by an enormously powerful section of the Press, whose patriotism nobody doubted for an instant, but whose prognostications were falsified over and over again. Mr. Asquith had far more vision, it seemed to me.

As July 1916 went on, the labours of the Russian Mission were nearing their conclusion, but General Byelyaev was anxious to see something of our system of turning recruits into soldiers in the short space of three months. Obviously the best place for him to visit was my late command at Shoreham! The impression it made on him came quite up to my expectations.

As all military movements were to be shrouded in the deepest secrecy it ought to have been arranged that, on leaving our agreeable quarters at the Ritz, our destination should remain unknown. The hotel staff, however, was well accustomed to camouflage of this description, the hall porter remarking to a bystander that he thought we would have a good voyage. This was when we were supposed to be starting to inspect munition works in the Midlands. Everything went well, and we embarked on board the very comfortable Norwegian steamer for Bergen on July 31st, at night, reaching our destination according to schedule, and going on immediately to Christiania, now called Oslo, and Stockholm. My luck had been extraordinarily good. There I was on my third official mission to Russia, a wonderful turn of Fortune's wheel.

Finland was reached in due course, and then the Russian capital, which had changed its name to Petrograd since my last visit. Sir George Buchanan, the ambassador, was in residence together with his wife and daughter. The Empress was at Tsarskoe Selo, and somebody suggested that I should pay my respects to Her Majesty there. The proposal did not appeal to me ; I preferred to see the Emperor first and to learn something more about the situation. Some of my preconceived ideas had already materialised ; the higher leadership, for instance, had not improved since the Russo-Japanese War, judging by the failure of Samsonov and other generals, but I wanted to pick up the threads before discussing big problems. The Empress would, I knew, be at General Head-quarters for her son's birthday on August 12th.

He was born in 1904, just before the Battle of Liaoyan, and was always delicate. As usual in Russia, the wildest rumours had been circulated about his health, but the explanation was quite simple : he suffered from hæmophilia, and required care. Buchanan wanted me to seize the first opportunity of trying to put sound ideas into Her Majesty's head, but the forthcoming visit to General Head-quarters at Mogilov would not afford a chance of discussing anything at all, because its brief duration would be very fully occupied with other matters, and besides, it would

have been the height of folly and impertinence to dash hot-foot into criticism of things of which I had no special knowledge.

It was no news to me to hear that Her Majesty was obstinate, impossible to convince, and a bad judge of character : I had said as much to King Edward years previously. On the other hand, it would have been easy for the best judge of character in Russia to have been misled. The whole structure of society was bound to lead to this, but the intensely virulent feeling, displayed by some of my friends, important people, male and female, against that unhappy lady had increased this time beyond all bounds. Reports of the most horrible nature, unsupported by a shred of evidence, were freely bandied about ; the belief that the misfortunes of Russia in the Japanese War were due to the Empress having the " evil eye " had been dinned into my ears at that time by a great lady, highly cultured and intimately acquainted with the great world in most capitals of Europe, but this childish foolishness paled into insignificance as compared with the scandal of 1916. She was unpopular from the time of her marriage, because she loved domestic life, and loathed what she considered to be the loose ways of many highly placed people, and Russian society wanted a scapegoat for the disasters of the Great War, being unconscious of its own failings.

After a short stay in Petrograd I arrived at Mogilov before Her Majesty returned to the north, and was not surprised to find her in decidedly low spirits. We did not touch then on any burning topic, the one uppermost in my mind at the time being the *queues* of people, waiting for hours and hours every day, outside the shops of the capital, in the hope of being able to purchase some trifling portion of the necessaries of life. Having myself, in former days, experienced the pangs of hunger, if only for a brief period, this state of affairs made a deep impression on me. Enquiries put to some of these wretched people showed me that the scarcity was by no means of recent origin, and everybody knew that there was an abundance of supplies in Russia. The general idea was that the Jews, as usual, had cornered everything, and



were holding back for impossible prices, whereas bad management on the part of the authorities was the real cause of the trouble.

It was a simple matter to lay the blame upon that unhappy race ; the Jewish elements were, no doubt, not more guiltless than shopkeepers of the Orthodox Church, but my conviction was that the culpability lay in the inherently bad Russian organisation and administration. If this were the state of affairs in midsummer, what was likely to be the case in winter ? Prolonged hunger makes the most patient of people angry.

## CHAPTER XX

ON reaching Mogilov on August 13th, I found Hanbury-Williams ready to start for home ; he had been chief of our Mission for two years, and Robertson wished to see him. Captain MacCaw, a clever Hussar officer, was the other member of the British Mission at General Headquarters. He was also a Russian scholar, for his chief had to have somebody to act as interpreter. On leaving London I had taken with me, as secretary and shorthand writer, Mr. Porters : in civil life he was on the staff of the Midland Bank, and became a non-commissioned officer after enlistment, but was given a commission on joining me. I wanted somebody for cypher and secretarial work, intending to be my own interpreter ; Porters was first-rate, and a most reliable shorthand writer—rather rare.

I found a number of old friends at General Headquarters, of whom some had served in the Russo-Japanese War, twelve years previously, and had, in the meantime, gained promotion. Alexyeev was one of them, and Gourko, an army commander, was there to report. He was the officer who had suppressed Samsonov's message about the Japanese flanking movement at Vafango (Telissu) in June 1904. I felt quite at home at once, and the Emperor was specially nice ; he told me not to hesitate to go to him at any hour of the day or night.

Alexyeev, the Chief of the Staff of the field armies, was a most pleasant man to deal with ; frank, clear and entirely reliable, with an enormous capacity for work. He appreciated the arrival of an officer with whom he could converse in his own language, for he was not a master of French, and did not always relish the presence of a junior as interpreter. Major-General Poustovoitenco was what we may term his Director of Military Operations,

a very good man for the purpose, and also most pleasant to work with. Colonel Bazarov, another capable officer, was his subordinate, and soon explained Birdin's mutilation of the telegram in 1905 at Irkutsk. Not all the Russian officers at General Head-quarters were altogether reliable; this was partly due to laziness in not keeping themselves informed of events, but this did not surprise me, and all my important relations were with His Majesty, Alexyeev and Poustovoitenko.

Admiral Sir Richard Phillimore was the British Naval Commissioner, and a better man for a somewhat thankless post could not have been found. In addition to his delightful personality, and great ability and common-sense, he, when in command of the *Inflexible*, had a large share in the sinking of Admiral von Spee's squadron. Everybody liked him immensely, and, when he left to hoist his flag at Rosyth, he was not replaced.

Mogilov was a large city of the usual rather squalid type, with about sixty thousand inhabitants, mostly Jews, who had all the trade in their hands. Situated on the Dnieper it had always been a great commercial centre. In normal times Mogilov was the seat of a civilian governor, whose residence, of medium size and built of wood, had been taken over for the Emperor. The military officers were located in neighbouring buildings, while the foreign Missions were in the Hôtel Bristol, a somewhat old-fashioned house.

The Chiefs of Missions lunched and dined daily with the Emperor, unless the Empress was present, when they lunched only, owing to want of sufficient space. They took it in turns to sit next the Emperor at dinner, the twelve-year-old Tsarevich being usually on his other hand. He was a very bright boy, remarkably good-looking, and curiously old in some respects, partly because he had an active brain and partly because he had been so much in the society of older people. He would converse most intelligently with a complete stranger, Russian or foreigner, who happened to be present. In addition to his studies he performed certain military duties such as standing sentry over the door of his father's study, equipped

with a miniature rifle and bayonet. When he opened a door for me his manners were perfect.

Although so young he had seen a good deal of the tragic side of life when taken to some of the hospitals, and this gave rise to a curious incident. Some British cinematograph films, taken in France, were to be shown at Mogilov, a few of them rather gruesome, and the general, who had charge of those matters, being too nervous to approach the Emperor himself, asked me to tell His Majesty that some of these films might upset the child, and that he had better not see them. "What nonsense!" replied Nicholas II; "tell him to mind his own business; my son has seen too many horrors already."

When I reached Mogilov, Belgium, France, Italy, Japan and Serbia were represented there, but the two last-named soon departed, Japan for Petrograd, and the other to command a Serbian corps being raised in Russia from refugees. Another Serb appeared in mid-September to raise a second one; he looked a very ruthless individual, and had been concerned in the murder of King Alexander and Queen Draga about a dozen years previously. General Janin told the Emperor one day that he would not like to awake at night and find him bending over him! Montenegro had also been represented at Mogilov, but her officer withdrew: it was stated that he had been discovered to be in enemy pay.

The Italian general, Romei, was a very pleasant man, but, like some other of our Allies, sometimes seemed to think that all trouble and disaster were really due to our lack of aid and energy. He was criticising us one day, to some Russian officers, for not supplying Italy with more shipping; he did not know that I happened to be standing near and had overheard him. When he finished I asked him what Italy was doing with some hundred and fifty ships which she had got hold of and was not using!

To my mind the outstanding personality among the chiefs of foreign Missions was the French general, Janin; he knew the German and Russian Armies thoroughly, and had been one of Joffre's two Chiefs of the Staff earlier



in the war ; very able, very sound, he was the perfect type of the French gentleman. After the Revolution broke out he commanded some auxiliaries in Kolchak's army, and had the melancholy task of bringing to France, in a small valise, what remained of the ashes of the murdered Imperial Family. The Emperor was very fond of Janin.

His Majesty's table was of the simplest description : three dishes and, as a concession to foreign guests, light red or white wine ; champagne was served only once, when the Japanese Prince, Kan, visited General Headquarters. The Emperor usually drank *kvass*, a kind of very thin beer. By a stroke of the pen he had made Russia "dry," and some of the peasant women told me they hoped she would ever remain so, while Prohibition had caused an enormous increase in the savings banks deposits. Truly it was a magnificent stroke.

In all my previous relations with the Emperor Nicholas he had always encouraged frankness, and it will be seen that he had not altered in the least in this respect by 1916, nor did the Empress, who was very little at Mogilov in my time, resent it. Stürmer, the successor of Sazonov at the Foreign Office, had been to General Headquarters to make his usual periodical report, and the little I saw of him did not impress me ; he seemed a heavy, slow man.

After the Emperor had accompanied his Consort to her train, on August 16th, he went for a drive alone, and presently his car came to a bridge in charge of which stood a sentry. His Majesty told me that he was then called upon to stop and give the password ; unfortunately, however, he did not know it, nor did his driver ; the sentry was firm, and not in the least impressed by the explanations offered, and there was also another difficulty : in Russia a sentry was forbidden to speak or even to answer a question, so this one stood there like a wooden image effectively barring the way. By good luck the commander of the guard came out and recognised his master, who was very much pleased with the sentry, and directed that he should be promoted to the rank of a non-commissioned officer.

In August, the military situation of the Allies had

reached a deadlock everywhere. Brussilov, whom I had known years before when he was a captain at the cavalry school in St. Petersburg, had picked up some 350,000 Austro-Hungarian prisoners—largely deserters on a grand scale—within the last two months, but the Germans in Russian territory presented an impenetrable barrier, although many of them were not young soldiers ; they had, however, a tremendous network of defences. The Russians outnumbered them, but were short of heavy guns and good aeroplanes, besides having other weak points.

On August 17th Roumania definitely threw in her lot with the Allies, and declared war shortly afterwards. The Russians had dismal forebodings about this, as a neutral Roumania covered their left flank, while the conditions, which she managed to impose, were based on her own vanity. Russia was not to send a man south of a certain line ; her advice on strategy and tactics was flouted, with the result that disaster followed disaster until the new ally lay utterly crushed.

On her entry into the fray she despatched a Military Mission to Mogilov, about twice the strength of those of any other two Powers put together ; it was headed by General Coanda, who was said to be pro-German ; his children had been educated in Germany. On October 10th the Emperor had two letters in his hand, which, he said, were from the King and Queen of Roumania. They were beseeching appeals for help on the Transylvanian Front—Hindenburg was carrying out his plan with a vengeance—and the King was, the Emperor told me, most dreadfully alarmed. The letter from the Queen said it was a matter of days if Russia was to save their country. From a remark of His Majesty to me I said that the Queen seemed to have the stouter heart of the two, to which he replied : “ Yes, but then she is my first cousin.” The Roumanian Minister at Petrograd had just arrived with these letters.

Everybody knows the ridiculous and false allegations of some highly placed Roumanians about having been left in the lurch by Russia. Discussing these two epistles His Majesty said he had already ordered three army corps to go and help, and, when I remarked that this would greatly

lengthen the Russian front and upset entirely other highly important plans, he replied : " Yes, but he is my ally, and I do not regard a treaty as being a scrap of paper."

General Coanda was panic-stricken : he had house property in Bucharest, and the enemy was bombing there. Just then there had been air-raids near my wife's old home in Hertfordshire, and Zeppelins had sailed over the park and house fairly frequently, a spectacle which my nieces thought entrancing, so I endeavoured to comfort Coanda by telling him this, but had not much success. One of his staff was a young cavalry officer, which surprised the Emperor, who imagined he would have been with his regiment in the field. The Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bratiano, had an unconscious sense of humour. He told the French Minister at Bucharest that he might have to fly and he did not know how ! I have seen a copy of the French Minister's telegram to Petrograd about this. Cadorna, the Italian Commander-in-Chief, had also begged Alexyeev to relieve him of the enemy pressure ; when Alexyeev pointed out that the Italians were in sufficient force to handle the matter, Cadorna became very cross, and sent quite an offensive message in reply.

After Roumania's bad beginning all kinds of fables were put forward to account for the disaster : one was that she had never received the munitions promised by the Allies, which were to have been sent through Russia. This story was on a par with other ridiculous ones, and the Emperor asked me whether any plausible explanation occurred to me. The only possible one seemed to be that some Roumanian officials, with an eye to business, had sold some of the stores to the enemy. His Majesty then told me to speak to Alexyeev about this, and that shrewd officer, I found, held the same view. I was shown the Roumanian receipts for a larger supply of munitions than the Roumanian authorities had originally demanded !

I have anticipated events somewhat. My post was most interesting from the commencement, but the Belgian general, Baron de Ryckel, told me he was dreadfully bored after two years at General Head-quarters. On suggesting that he might take a holiday somewhere he replied :

*"Où voulez-vous que j'aille? Je n'ai pas de pays."*  
Poor man !

On August 19th the Emperor had been discussing various matters with me. After paying a very high tribute to Mr. McKenna's wonderful skill as a financier, and deploring the introduction of political Committees of Investigation into French armies in the field, he turned to home subjects, and said : " I am often accused of being retrograde," whereas, he went on, he was anxious for progress on sound lines. I then lamented the utterly illiterate state of the Russian masses, to which His Majesty replied : " Yes, what education there is for them is mostly in the hands of the priests, who teach those foolish miracles." He added that he had often wished to get a good system of elementary education introduced, " but the Church was too strong." He instanced the story of " poor Martha " who, being at the point of death, wished to go to Heaven. The priest promised to arrange this. Martha died and, to her horror, found herself in Hell, where she was informed that, on account of her sins, it would be some time before she would be released : she ought to have paid more attention to the priest in her lifetime. Oddly enough I had looked in at a village school near Mogilov one day, and the book opened at this very story, which was evidently a favourite one. Anybody who knew Russia in the old days, is aware that the Orthodox Church was all-powerful everywhere ; at festivals, parades and other functions it took the first place, and was interested in keeping the people ignorant and superstitious.

I received a copy of a Foreign Office telegram to Buchanan, telling him to arrange with the French Ambassador for a joint representation to Stürmer, the Foreign Minister, that Russia should attack Bulgaria simultaneously with Roumania. Russia was to be asked to send an additional 200,000 men to the Dobrudja for the purpose. The idea was that this combined move might induce Bulgaria to sue for peace, which would open direct railway communication between Salonika and Roumania, the Allied forces at Salonika attacking at the same time. The scheme, if successful, would have benefited Russia



immensely by facilitating the delivery to her of guns and munitions.

I was directed to obtain Alexyeev's views on the proposal. He said he could not advise the Emperor to send a larger force than that already agreed upon, and gave his reasons: Roumania had insisted on all sorts of conditions for her own ends; another 200,000 troops, even if they could be spared, would come under the command of Roumanian generals, in whom he placed scant confidence; lastly an Austro-German-Turkish army had been concentrating round Lemberg.

Alexyeev then protested very strongly against military questions being handled by diplomatists, remarking that, in his opinion, they were "foul people" (*skvernnye lyoudy*). His Majesty concurred, and told me to transmit their views. My instructions had been not to suggest anything to Alexyeev but to ascertain his opinion in my own way, which was easy enough to do. I had given him a Memorandum on the subject, which we discussed fully. He agreed entirely with Sir William Robertson's forecast that Hindenburg contemplated the decisive defeat of Roumania in the very near future; remarking that the Russians were tied by climatic conditions rather to the defensive on their south-western front, Alexyeev said he thought few, if any, Bulgarians, and no Turkish troops could be spared for Hindenburg's plan. His view was that the Germans could reinforce the four Austrian and three German divisions, which were already available, by six or seven others from the Verdun front, while they might also risk taking some troops from the Russian northern and central fronts. Hindenburg, then, could at any rate send some fourteen divisions against Roumania, but Alexyeev was of opinion that "it would be a great mistake" to send a Russian army to Roumania. He said her real base was Russia, and that, if her army on the Hungarian front should be handled on "purely military lines," it ought to be able to hold Hindenburg's attack. If it could not do so then it should retire eastwards, while the Russians, coming through the Carpathians, would attack the enemy in flank and rear; for this purpose he would strengthen the Russian left.

Alexyeev had been, he told me, greatly disappointed with, if not much surprised at, the Roumanian Army, whose command and personnel, he said—on September 30th—were so very indifferent as to make matters much more difficult. Not only had proper precautions been neglected, but all ranks “had lost their heads.” General Coanda had appealed to Alexyeev frequently for all sorts of impossible aid, and had been a “real worry.”

As a matter of fact Buchanan had not acted on Lord Grey's telegram because the French Government, on reflection, thought it would be useless to put forward the request; Janin was in constant communication with the ambassador of the Republic. There were other instances in which diplomacy took a hand in strategical matters: the Emperor and Alexyeev told me that the Russian Minister at Teheran had telegraphed, somewhat in a panic, for more troops; he was told that the 20,000 bayonets on the spot would suffice, and His Majesty added: “I have given him a nasty snub and ordered him not to interfere with what does not concern him.”

One day, at dinner, I said something to the Emperor about politicians not being always very well informed about their own peoples, as they were so immersed in their own affairs and hopes. Thereupon His Majesty asked me: “Would you like to know why I dismissed Sazonov?” Now that statesman had “resigned” on the score of ill-health before my appointment to Russia, and the Emperor had sent him the usual complimentary letter of regret. Whether the resignation was voluntary or otherwise had been unknown to me, but, having met Sazonov at the Buchanans', on my way to Mogilov in August, it was evident that his retirement had been involuntary. My reply to His Majesty was, of course, that the real reason would be most interesting, and he then said:

“I dismissed him because he was going too fast and too far, and raising hopes which, with an illiterate people like mine, could not be realised for generations. If a Revolution should occur, those moderate men, like Sazonov, would be swept away in two weeks, and then there would be chaos; he does not know his own countrymen.”

His prophecy was fulfilled almost to the day, and, as it agreed entirely with my own opinion, I wrote—being in England—as soon as the news was announced here, to Mr. Balfour's principal Private Secretary, Sir Eric Drummond, that the Allies should make immediate arrangements for the future conduct of military operations on the basis that "Russia is dead to the Allied cause." This note was then shown to my wife, who remarked, very sensibly, that there was no need for me to thrust myself into the arena, especially as there was a very powerful influence in London, which had disliked my appointment to the Imperial Head-quarters in the first instance, and a request of the Emperor and Alexyeev had recently been treated in the rudest possible manner.

As the letter was written, however, and my Russian forecast was not likely to elicit a reply, it was posted. To my surprise an answer to it came by return of post. Drummond wrote that the news about Russia was better, and "I hope and believe that your view that Russia is dead to the Allied cause is incorrect." This was written on March 27th, 1917.

The Emperor's remarks about Sazonov and a Revolution were so extremely interesting that they caused me to do something which showed once more how entirely unfitted I was to be a courtier: being a great bread eater I had finished my roll, and the Emperor, observing this, pushed his own plate of toast towards me, when I, absentmindedly, ate it all. On this occasion, when we had reached the coffee stage, the Emperor, showing once more his gentle, kindly nature, lighted a match for my cigarette and held it for me. On the following day toast was laid by my plate!

There was plenty of work to be done, chiefly by cable, but these pages touch on the more intimate side of my stay at Mogilov, as they may throw a little light on the main issues which are known to everybody. Officers and officials were always passing through to report to the Emperor. The story has been already quoted of a young Russian cavalry officer of the Guard who said that the horse is the worst enemy of man, but a very nice young

colonel, Rodzianko, came to Mogilov one day ; he had ridden the winner of the King's Gold Cup at Olympia at the last three contests, and so retained it permanently, an extraordinarily fine performance. His family were prominent members of St. Petersburg society.

The only time I had seen Ferdinand of Bulgaria was at the Coronation at Moscow in 1896, but the Emperor discussed him very fully with me on August 26th, 1916. When Ferdinand threw in his lot with the Central Powers, General Radko-Dmitriev was his Minister in Russia, and he was so disgusted with the proceeding that he went to the Emperor "with tears in his eyes" and begged for a command in the Russian Army, which was at once given to him. The Emperor then remarked that he knew Ferdinand "well, unfortunately," and then told me the following : about six years previously there was a dinner-party on board His Majesty's yacht in honour of the German Emperor, who spoke of Ferdinand to Izvolsky—then the Minister for Foreign Affairs—as an "atrocious being," unspeakable, in fact. William II, said the Emperor, was talking in a voice intended for everybody present to hear ; he called the Bulgarian ruler a "hermaphrodite," and "I felt so uncomfortable that I did not know which way to look," added His Majesty.

"Well, sir," I remarked, "the Kaiser has a nice friend now, hasn't he ?"

Nicholas II then went on to say that, during the first Balkan War, when the Allied Balkan forces were nearing Constantinople, Ferdinand wrote to him that, if he should capture the city, he would present it to Russia. Nicholas II kept the letter, but, unfortunately for Ferdinand, he also saw—from another source—a photograph of the Bulgarian monarch in Byzantine robes and crown, posing as Emperor of Constantinople. This picture was taken just at the time when the letter was written !

The Emperor said to me one day : "I do not know why Turkey entered the war, for I never intended to interfere with her." Some Russian prisoners, who had escaped, had been sent from Germany to work in Bulgaria ; they declared that the Germans there treated them much better



than the Bulgarians, their brother Slavs, did, and that the German officers with the Bulgarian troops treated these like dogs. Commenting on this the Emperor told me that the Bulgarians had been practically enslaved for so many centuries by the Turks that they had not yet got over their degradation, and Alexander III told his son that, during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8, the Turk was a "far finer fellow than the Bulgarian." This corroborates what Mr. Gladstone, that ardent Grecophile and anti-Turk, wrote about the Greeks requiring a very long time before the effects of their degradation could wear off.

As regards the outcome of the war the Emperor told me that he did not believe that Providence would permit the Germans to conquer, and that, in any event, "we had better all be dead than live under the German heel." Not long ago, during a visit to Germany, some of my friends, of the Junker class, blamed England bitterly for having caused the downfall of their country, but I told them that we all knew what would have happened to us if the boot had been on the other leg.

Colonel (now Major-General Sir Alfred) Knox was the British military attaché at St. Petersburg when the war commenced. A very able soldier, he was constantly visiting the field armies, and I told him it would be pleasant to see him at Mogilov. Somehow or another he had the idea that his presence there would not be appreciated by the Russian authorities, but, on my asking the Emperor and Alexyeev about this, they both said they hoped he would visit General Head-quarters whenever convenient to him, and give them the benefit of his own observations. This was very satisfactory for both sides, and the Russians told me afterwards how much they enjoyed hearing Knox's accounts: he could always be relied upon to say what he thought!

Count Pourtalès was the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg in 1914, and, during my stay at Mogilov, the British Government had good reason to believe that he continued to be singularly well informed about affairs in Russia. I spoke about this to the Emperor, who was

much surprised and greatly annoyed. His Majesty suspected the Spanish Ambassador as the intermediary, for he had the reputation of being pro-German and, after considerable delay, was to come, on September 4th, 1916, to present his credentials. The Emperor said to me: "I shall be very cool with him, and will warn my officers to be very careful what they say to him or in his hearing." His Excellency arrived in time for luncheon, and departed immediately afterwards, this being the usual procedure.

It was also said that Count Pourtalès, in Berlin, had been aware of the impending departure of Sazonov from office in 1916, and the Emperor's suspicion may have been right, but it was often, perhaps usually, impossible to sift truth from falsehood regarding information given to the enemy. England had often been most virulently accused, by certain sections of St. Petersburg society and the Russian Press, of stinting her aid to Russia. Sazonov was in office, and the Press was subject to rigorous censorship. Matters got to such a pitch that Buchanan resolved to make a public statement on the subject, emphasising the fact that we were then subsidising our Ally to the tune of some £300,000,000 in cash and kind annually. Before saying anything, however, he asked Sazonov whether he had any objection to the Russian public learning what we were doing. The Foreign Minister begged the British Ambassador on no account to give details! When I asked Buchanan the reason for this refusal he replied: "I do not know." "No," was my reply, "but it must have been that he felt the announcement would clash with his own personal interests." Lady Georgina thereupon said to me: "Well, you are a very bad judge of character." They were, unfortunately, hypnotised by the man, and considered my presence in Russia a danger, because they believed quite honestly that my view was utterly wrong. Who was to fathom the depths of Sazonov's mind?

The Emperor had always mistrusted politicians and diplomatists generally speaking. Alexyeev told me that they might, perhaps, be allowed to have a say when the enemy was vanquished, but His Majesty went further,

and declared that they must not be permitted to draw up the terms of peace, as then it would be "sure to be a bad peace." Gossip, malicious and other, had always been a characteristic of the Russian capital, and, during the war, this increased tenfold, thus placing diplomatists in a more difficult position than ever. Shortly after the return of the Missions from London, in August, it was declared positively that Mr. Bark, the Finance Minister, was to be dismissed. On asking the Emperor about this His Majesty replied that the Minister was "never firmer" in office !

To show what foundation there was—not only in Russia—for the charge that England was not a faithful ally, it may be mentioned that, up to August 20th, 1916, our casualties exceeded 42,000 officers and 900,000 other ranks, exclusive of the great numbers of sick and wounded who had returned to duty ! Nearly 12,000 officers and 187,000 other ranks had been killed, although it had been guaranteed that, with the help of our 150,000 army, the Germans would be crushed in no time. The Somme battles alone had cost us, by the end of August 1916, some 250,000 casualties.

Supplies for Russia from Vladivostok had been greatly delayed, which did not surprise me, but on my taking the matter up with Alexyeev, there was such vigorous intervention that London told me my representations had been "very effective."

As September 5th was the anniversary of the assumption of command by the Emperor, Her Majesty arrived on the previous day, and two little boys came up to play with the Tsarevich ; they were of quite middle-class origin, as his parents thought it desirable that he should know there were other people in the world besides Sovereigns and Grand Dukes. The Empress told me, when we were discussing the upbringing of children, that she had always intended her daughters to be able to do something well, but remonstrances had poured in, of which the gist was that "a Grand Duchess of Russia must never do anything." "But," continued Her Majesty, "I insisted and had my way."

The appointment of Hindenburg as Chief of the German General Staff impressed Alexyeev greatly, and he at once foresaw that it was the harbinger of vastly important events. The nomination coincided with Roumania's declaration of war, in which Falkenhayn, his predecessor, had not believed. Some changes had also taken place in higher Russian commands: Kouropatkin, my old friend, was removed from the command of the Northern Armies, and appointed Governor-General of Turkestan; my information was that his plans had been sound, but that, by waiting to improve them, he lost opportunities of striking heavy blows. This may have been the case, but it was certain that the Russians could not capture the main German lines until, in the course of a year or more, they should be equipped with a sufficient number of heavy guns and learn how to use them. General Gourko, who was, as the Emperor told me, in high favour with His Majesty ("I am very fond of Gourko"), had expected to succeed Kouropatkin, but Ruzsky was appointed, and he, within a few months, was to advise his Sovereign to abdicate. Gourko, however, superseded Bezobrazov, who commanded the "special" (Guards) army on the central front. The whole thing was a complete surprise to the latter, whom I had known years before as a very average officer: he came to Mogilov in time for dinner, and looked exceedingly pleased, but, later on in the evening, he wore quite a different expression: he had just learned his fate.

With the very best intentions in the world all round, it was certain that strategical problems, if put forward by Foreign Offices, could not be handled without causing friction. For instance, the Foreign Office telegram, relating to 200,000 additional Russians for the Dobrudja, read as if, in return for the Emperor's consent, a bribe of additional guns was to be offered, so I paraphrased its language, and informed Robertson. Very soon afterwards Buchanan got another telegram telling him to be careful not to let the Russians think there was any suggestion of a bribe.

The French Government was, eventually, desirous of inducing Alexyeev to reconsider his refusal, and an attempt was to be made through Stürmer, in spite of the objection



already raised to this course. Joffre had also telegraphed to the Russian Chief of the Staff in the same sense. It looked as if Joffre had been induced against his better judgment to adopt this plan, for the French Government said that compliance on the part of Russia would be followed by the despatch of 600 machine guns monthly, although it was known that none could be spared at all ! Once the 200,000 Russians had started they would have been obliged to continue their move, machine guns or no machine guns. But Alexyeev stood firm : to weaken another army group by such a great force at such a time seemed to him out of the question, and the Emperor also expressed to me his full concurrence in this decision.

On September 8th I had a long conversation with the Empress, and mentioned that my mind was still open as to whether the German Emperor personally had wished for war. Being aware that Her Majesty did not care for him prior to the catastrophe, it was a good opportunity to ask for her views. She had not seen him since 1912, and, remarking how dreadful it was for friends and relatives to be in opposite camps during such a tragedy, went on : " I am perfectly certain that he hoped to have no war in his reign, but to end it in peace ; he was overcome by the Crown Prince's party, who were convinced that England would never fight." Her Majesty also remarked that William II, on the occasion of their last meeting, had " become very quiet."

A report reached me from London that President Wilson was contemplating the offer of his good services as mediator between the belligerents, so I had a lengthy interview with the Emperor. As soon as the matter was mentioned to him, His Majesty replied : " What impertinence ! I will never make peace until the enemy is beaten." This was in September, and his attitude was always, in my experience, consistently the same. Of course, anything of interest was invariably reported by me to more than one quarter, but Buchanan was sceptical on this particular point, as will be seen in the next chapter.

In the course of a long conversation with the Empress on September 11, Her Majesty brought up the question of

diplomatic interference in military affairs. It resolved itself into this: the Emperor and Alexyeev disliked it extremely because Stürmer, or any other Russian Foreign Minister, could, at the best, do no more than submit the Allied representations to General Head-quarters, thus causing loss of time, besides the possibility of representations being transmitted inaccurately in quite good faith.

It occurred to me then to criticise some appointments which had been made in Russia, and I added that it must be enormously difficult for the Emperor and herself to obtain sound and accurate information on, practically, any question of importance, and that, at times, she must almost "feel inclined to scream." "Well," she replied, "yes, it is often exasperating. You ask one person about a matter and get one answer; then you ask another about the same one and get another; a third says something else, and so on. What *is* one to believe? *How* is one to get at the truth?"

It is seen therefore that Her Majesty did not wish to surround herself with an unscalable fence, for she went on to say that, when she was a girl, it was the custom for princesses to be kept "in rigorous seclusion," but, times having changed, she considered it would be harmful to have continued that system. We know that the views and tastes of this unhappy and unfortunate lady had little in common with those of important people in her adopted country, and it was from these important people that diplomatists acquired most of their information.

The reconciliation between the Emperor and his surviving brother, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich, was complete on September 14th, when His Imperial Highness came to luncheon and wore the aiguillettes of an aide-de-camp to His Majesty. He had lived for a time at Knebworth, and had been in disgrace owing to his unauthorised marriage; he was very pleasant to meet, and had, no doubt, benefited from his sojourn in England.

Incidentally it was very pleasant to hear from the Emperor that my epistles to Alexyeev were "in excellent Russian," but then His Majesty liked to go out of his way to say nice things, for scarcely any mortal man could write Russian often without making mistakes, although the

sense would be in no degree impaired thereby. The Empress told me once of the Emperor's remark to her, that he frequently found grammatical errors in reports submitted to him by his Ministers. He certainly spared no pains to further the Allied cause : one night after dinner, just as everybody was dispersing to work, it occurred to me to ask for an interview about something which had slipped my mind while we had been conversing. He told me to go to his study after the others had gone, and, on my apologising for interrupting his own work, he replied : "That is what I am here for."

An instance of German politeness may be recorded. A short time before my departure for Russia in July 1916, some Foreign Office bags had been despatched, and, somehow or another, they fell into Fritz's hands. If they contained, as was believed, the July distribution of our fleets, together with the supposed distribution of the German ships, in addition to other official documents, he must have been interested. The private letters were, however, forwarded in course of time ; some of them were for Admiral Phillimore ; they were marked in German : "Opened by the military authorities, and resealed by the Post Office." This was very handsome behaviour, and, speaking generally, the German censorship, so far as my experience went, was actuated by more common-sense than ours : if a British officer was killed it was not permissible to add the name of his regiment in private obituary notices lest the enemy should learn something useful from the death of a subaltern. On the other hand letters reached me from Germany, from time to time, in which, for instance, it would be stated that Lieutenant-Colonel von Scheliha had just been transferred from the Western to the Roumanian front. These letters were, very properly, always opened by our censorship. Throughout the war we, I think, carried the suppression of any kind of news to a useless extent.

By the end of September 1916, things had not been progressing so favourably as had been hoped on the Russian south-west front ; the Germans were there in force, were well supplied with everything and were far

more difficult to handle than was the Austro-Hungarian army. This reminds me of a German prisoner who was interviewed by General Janin, when he was Chief of the Staff in France. The man told him that he had served on the Eastern and Western fronts, as well as against Serbia. It had been very unpleasant indeed, fighting the Russians, and matters had been even worse in France. Janin had imagined that the Serbian campaign must have been the most unpleasant of all, but the prisoner, in reply to his query, laughed, and said: "Ach! it was like going out hare shooting!"

Here is another of the innumerable stories current during the war. Some not very dependable continental allies were placed in a fairly safe place to receive their baptism of fire, while a few British were behind them in reserve. Fritz fired a few shots which routed those in the front line, who dashed through our men at high speed. A startled hare jumped up from its form and was overtaken by the foreign commander; he kicked it aside with the remark: "Get out of the way, you brute, and let somebody run who can run!"

This leads to another digression. Some other rather weak-kneed allies were also fired at and bolted. On their way they perceived a number of motor-cycles, which were parked close by, and they felt that it was Providence which had put them there to aid the runners, so they jumped on to the machines and sailed gaily along. Presently they were seen by some American troops, who thought the others were Germans; they opened fire therefore with their machine guns, with fatal results. Providence had, for once, acted unkindly.

The Japanese Prince Kan, cousin of the Mikado, arrived at Mogilov on September 24th, having travelled through Siberia from Vladivostok, which means Ruler of the East. We all went to meet him at the station, and he remained to luncheon and dinner, leaving again in the evening. At the former meal the Emperor made a short speech of welcome in French, to which His Imperial Highness replied in the same language. His Majesty had told me, a day or two previously, that, under the circumstances, there would



have to be speeches and added : " I always have mine written out, so that words cannot be put into my mouth afterwards, by the Press, which I do not utter. You know my neighbour over the border often used to say things about which there were disputes afterwards."

Who would have dreamed, only a short time previously, that such a meeting could take place ? Different countries different customs : the Japanese do not use napkins, and one of the Japanese generals had tied his tightly round his waist ; forgetting to remove it when we all stood up for the speeches, he presented a spectacle unusual to Western eyes ; he very likely thought that Europeans are naturally unclean, and the spotless Japanese houses certainly gave him ground for the belief. The German language was strictly forbidden, as already mentioned, under pain of severe penalties, but the rule had to be relaxed on this occasion, as some of the princely suite knew no other Western tongue.

On September 27th the Belgian general, de Ryckel, told me that MacCaw had received a telegram from Hanbury-Williams, which announced his departure from London for the 30th of that month, so that my time at Mogilov was drawing to a close. On the following day the Emperor told me a couple of stories—we were not always talking about business matters—which, said His Majesty, had the advantage of being true.

He came to England in 1893 for the occasion of the marriage of King George—at that time the Duke of York. General Lynedoch Gardiner, a member of Queen Victoria's suite, was attached to his person. They were staying at Marlborough House, and, a day or two before the ceremony, the Tsarevich was in the hall with the bridegroom. They were, at that time, remarkably alike, and Gardiner came up and said to the Duke that he was commanded by the Queen to invite him to attend the marriage of the Prince of Wales's son, mistaking the one for the other.

The other story was that the Emperor and Empress, who had only been married for a short time, were staying at Marlborough House soon after the birth of the present Prince of Wales. A garden-party was taking place ;

the Duke and Duchess of York, and the Tsarevich with his bride were walking in line, each Prince with his Consort on his arm, when numbers of people congratulated the Imperial couple on the happy event !

“It was very awkward, you know,” said the Emperor, “but we thought the best thing to do was to accept the good wishes !”

By the end of September the English and French Staffs thought it would be desirable to have a conference of Allied military representatives at Joffre's General Head-quarters in the following November to discuss future plans. It was scarcely to be expected that Alexyeev could attend in person, and the Russian Military Commissioner in France, General Jilinsky, had shown himself to be out of touch with affairs. This did not astonish me, because I had known him during the Russo-Japanese War, and he had really been sent to France in order to be out of the way ; he had some influential friends in his own country. General Palitsin relieved him in November 1916.

It will have been seen that the Emperor and Alexyeev, the two most important personages from a military point of view, had unbounded confidence that their British ally was doing, and had been doing, her very utmost to render every possible aid to the joint cause. Apart from malevolent gossip, impossible to squash, in Petrograd society, there had also been some sharp criticism about us.

The Grand Duke Serge, chief of artillery matters at Mogilov, thought, at one time, that we might have supplied more and better guns and munitions. He was, however, a pleasant and sensible man, and I was able soon to convince him that his criticisms had been altogether unjust ; he understood his work, and was a hard worker. At one time there were complaints from the Front that a number of the shells, which we had supplied, were blind, whereas they were nothing of the sort : the Russian gunners had not understood the fuzes.

Finance, of course, was a factor of boundless importance, and, although Mr. Bark and I got on very well—he came to Mogilov to report to the Emperor—we did not always

see eye to eye, and I explained to the Emperor, in his presence, my reasons. The Finance Minister had a very big stock of gold in Petrograd; he wanted to hoard it there, and get more out of Mr. McKenna than the latter had been able to promise. Mr. Bark's idea was that, by keeping his own gold in Russia, the rouble would necessarily be stabilised thereby, an idea common to a good many other financiers. It was not, however, likely that a successor to Mr. Bark would have improved matters, and, as the Emperor was very fond of him, while Mr. McKenna was perfectly capable of controlling his own Department, our conversation at Mogilov had nothing tart about it. The Russian Minister of Finance was certainly a very zealous worker, and his actions were inspired by the best motives. The gossipmongers of the capital spread the impression that the British Chancellor of the Exchequer was far too grasping, that he, in fact, was endeavouring to weight Russia with such a load of debt that, on the conclusion of peace, she would be unable ever to free herself from our bonds! This would, it was declared, lash her to our chariot wheels with unbreakable fetters, rendering her politically subservient to Great Britain. Imputing dark schemes, devoid of any foundation, had always been a feature of life in the Russian capital.

Our difficulties were, of course, immeasurably great, for, without England, the remainder of the Allies would have collapsed long before the autumn of 1916. It is pleasant to recall the indisputable fact that the Secretary of State for War, Mr. Lloyd George, realised fully the needs of Russia, more so than some of his military advisers, and he was one of the two men in whom the Emperor and Alexyeev placed unbounded confidence. The other was Sir William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. My instructions were to let them know immediately if there should be the slightest suspicion of dissatisfaction with our efforts to help, but there was never the very faintest sign of this. Differences of opinion about strategical problems were bound to arise, but these never for one moment affected the absolute confidence

which has been recorded. It was a just appreciation of our stupendous and successful exertions, of which, on August 4th, 1914, nobody would have deemed us, mighty as we were, capable.

Our output of guns and munitions was growing daily, but all our Allies were aware that several months must elapse, after September 1916, before everybody's wants, including our own, could be supplied. The Russians required not only heavy guns, but efficient aircraft as well. Now the Russian naval and military representatives in London and in Paris were working against each other, instead of having one single strong chief. Any salesman, who came along, was taken at his own valuation, while the agent in Petrograd of a very big British firm was endeavouring to plant an order for a type which our air authorities regarded as most unsatisfactory, and would not use. The Russians had not had much experience in this line, and were apt to be taken in. This problem was rather outside Alexyeev's work, but I spoke to him and to the Emperor about it, just before my departure for England, and they were both much disgusted on learning the facts, which had been transmitted to me from London. On the other hand my representations to London resulted in the Russians getting some heavy guns sooner than had been expected, and Alexyeev was so delighted that he found time to write me a very warm letter of thanks, while the Emperor told me to thank Robertson "very gratefully" for his action in the matter.

All this time various projects were mooted for the salvation of Roumania. The situation was enormously complicated by the pretensions of the Roumanians, and Robertson grasped fully the need for close co-operation under one command in their campaign. This had been also Alexyeev's view, and the French general, Berthelot, accompanied by his *chef de cuisine*, passed through Mogilov, in October, on his way to Roumania. General Coanda was by way of emphasising to him that he would be under Roumanian orders, but Berthelot left him under no illusion, for he said that he regarded himself as subordinate to Alexyeev.



The Emperor therefore directed me to tell Robertson that his view would "greatly strengthen the hands" of His Majesty's Chief of the Staff, who had previously spoken to Coanda in the same sense. Russia, said the Emperor to me on October 14th, could not commit herself to Roumanian hands. "At one moment the Roumanians are in utter despair, and at another want to be in supreme and independent control." The Emperor and Alexyeev were also anxious lest they should make a separate peace, which would release some twenty divisions of the enemy. There had been previously a report at Mogilov that the King had fled to the Central Powers.

The deadlock on the Salonika front had also caused repercussions at the Russian General Head-quarters, and the Emperor spoke to me about it. The idea at Mogilov had been that the British, at any rate, might have done more; on pointing out the difficulty of carrying on mountain war with newly raised troops, accustomed to quite a different landscape, this elicited the reply from His Majesty: "But my troops are not mountaineers; if, however, they are ordered to operate in a country like Transcaucasia or the Carpathians, they do so."

On the face of it the argument seemed sound, but I was very glad when the subject was raised, because it enabled me to prove, to the complete satisfaction of the Emperor and Alexyeev, that what mortal man could do, had been and would be done by our commander, General Sir George Milne. The fact was that the French general, Sarrail, was in chief command. The French Government did not much care where he was so long as he was out of France, for he is one of those political, anti-clerical generals, with powerful Radical support at home, embarrassing to any republican administration. His superiors in Paris therefore did not dare, nor indeed wish, to recall him. It was very satisfactory that my representations to the Emperor, and to his Chief of the Staff, had the happy result of giving them the same absolute and thoroughly well-deserved confidence in Milne that London had.

When in Paris, in July 1916, Izvolsky, the Russian Ambassador, told me that we could at any rate quite

easily spare two divisions from Egypt for the Salonika front, a step which would result in smashing the Bulgarians. "I know all about the Balkan peoples," he said. Perhaps he did, but, as I told him at the time, we had the Germans to reckon with, and that Robertson must be the judge of what was possible for the general good of the Allied cause. Mogilov had been badly informed, until I was fortunately able to clear the air by giving indisputable facts. Sarrail, for instance, had interpolated French detachments on every line of operations on the Salonika front, the obvious result of which was confusion and friction. Not only was I completely successful in explaining this problem at Mogilov—by the light of the information given to me from London—but we all advanced a step farther. In reply to a question of mine the Emperor authorised me to inform London that, if we would ask the French Government to recall Sarrail, and give him some post where he could not do much harm, this proposal would have His Majesty's and Alexyeev's very hearty support. But Sarrail was a tough nut, and it was not until 1925, when he had done a vast amount of harm in another sphere, that his superiors ventured to supersede him.

On October 10th the Serbian Minister at Petrograd came to Mogilov and remained to dinner. He looked the picture of a German *kommandierender General*—or Corps Commander. His name was Yourischitch (all Serbian names end in "itch"). It seemed odd somehow, and, on taking a brief lesson in Serbian, I found that Yourischitch is the equivalent of the German word "sturm" (storm). Further enquiry informed me that he had been a subaltern in the German Army in 1870-1. He migrated subsequently to Serbia, I was told, and made a very good thing out of the change. It was scarcely tactful to keep him in Russia where, during the war, anybody who spoke German was fined three thousand roubles, or imprisoned for not less than three months!

If the Emperor and Alexyeev were thoroughly satisfied with our exertions the Serbians were not. Everybody knew that, if Bulgaria could be isolated, the advantage

to the Allied cause would be almost inestimable. Mr. Lloyd George was, like the Russians, an "easterner" in wishing to force a decision in the Near East, as they did not see how the Western front was to be pierced, but they knew quite well that this front must be held at all costs. Alexyeev told me, on October 17th, that, while he fully recognised the importance of the Russian and Western fronts, he believed the Germans could relinquish territory there without breaking the German spirit, whereas, if they should be beaten in the Near East, the effect on them would be disastrous. Alexyeev was very sound; the Emperor told me that it was really he who carried out the retreat from the Warsaw front in 1915, as the Grand Duke Nicholas's Chief of the Staff, Yanuskevich, was not equal to the task, one of enormous difficulty.

The Serbians were, however, much more "eastern" than anybody else: Alexyeev received, on October 13th, a long telegram, of which he sent me a copy, from General Levkovich in Macedonia. This message was sent at the request of the Serbian representative, and breathed his views. The Serbian idea was apparently that neither England nor France was putting the "fine flower" of their manhood into the struggle; should things go a little worse even this Serbian blossom might, disheartened, abandon the contest and return home. The "superficial judgment" of our military authorities was sharply criticised, and the message ended by a laudation of Sarrail, concerning whom the opinions of the Emperor and Alexyeev have already been recorded.

On taking leave of Alexyeev on October 17th, we discussed again the Macedonian problem, and I undertook, of course, to express his views in London. In fact, the Emperor had told me, on October 11th, two days prior to the receipt of Levkovich's telegram, that he wished me personally to represent to Sir William Robertson his own views, and those of Alexyeev, not forgetting their ardent wish for the recall of Sarrail. They were also critical of Joffre, who had not then been relieved of his post as Commander-in-Chief.

Sir John Hanbury-Williams returned to Mogilov on October 18th. Owing to the size of the Roumanian Mission there was no room for us both, and I took leave of His Majesty and of the Empress on the same day, leaving Mogilov on that afternoon for London, having had the most interesting time of my life.



## CHAPTER XXI

I MUST ask the kindly indulgence of readers for much of the contents of this chapter, because it would not, I venture to think, be possible to explain what followed my departure from the Emperor's Head-quarters unless some matters, personal to myself, are recorded. At this distance of time they have, in themselves, no interest for anybody except myself, and my own immediate belongings, so that it would be both silly and, for my readers, wearisome to quote them merely to try and show what a splendid success I was at Mogilov ! All personal matters would be excluded were it not that they bear upon the Revolution of March 1917, which culminated in the subsequent Bolshevik atrocities.

When the war broke out Hanbury-Williams was nominated as the Chief of the British Military Mission ; it was considered that it was more important to have an officer, in that position, of ability and great charm of manner, who was not acquainted with Russia, rather than one who, possessed of that knowledge, was not his equal—he certainly could have had no superior—in those other respects. In any case there would have been no suggestion of my nomination in 1914 ; my retirement had taken place some years previously, and there were plenty of qualified officers, notably Colonel Knox, our military attaché at Petrograd.

Some little time after Sir William Robertson became Chief of the Imperial General Staff he naturally wanted to see Hanbury-Williams, who had been two years in Russia ; as he was aware of my acquaintance with the Emperor, and that I was the only available officer who had served previously with the Russian Army in the field, he decided—I can never be sufficiently grateful to him—to send me to His Majesty as locum-tenens.

When the proposal was put to the Emperor by Hanbury-Williams he agreed readily. In those days officers sometimes lost their appointments very unexpectedly, so Hanbury-Williams was very naturally delighted when His Majesty fell in with his own view that he should return after a holiday. As regards myself I was told, from an unimpeachable source, that my appointment was not altogether relished by some in the Foreign Office, but one cannot please everybody.

I had been nearly three weeks at Mogilov when, on September 1st, the Emperor volunteered the remark to me that it was "far more convenient for all concerned" if the services of an interpreter could be dispensed with. A couple of days later, Alexyeev's Quartermaster-General, Poustovoitenko, made the same remark, and one of General Janin's officers had mentioned that, when the French general, Pau, was at General Head-quarters, the Chief of the Staff was irritated (*s'agaçait*), because he knew no Russian. The fact was that he disliked interpreters knowing all that was said, preferring to deal direct, when possible, with the Chiefs of important Missions. Alexyeev was not a good French scholar, but Janin was a first-rate Russian one.

A very awkward situation arose on September 12th: the Quartermaster-General—whom we would term Director of Operations—told me at luncheon that Alexyeev wished him to ask me, privately, how it could be arranged for me to remain permanently at General Head-quarters as Chief of the Mission. This was, of course, a very flattering surprise, and it had never occurred to me that there might be some special meaning in a remark, which the Empress had made to me on the previous day. We had been talking about education when Her Majesty mentioned that it is "always unsatisfactory" doing business through an interpreter, as he might "just miss a particular shade of meaning." A few days previously Admiral Roussine, Chief of the Russian Naval Staff, said casually that Alexyeev found it very satisfactory dealing with me direct; this was very nice but, of course, I had thought no more about all these remarks until Poustovoitenko spoke to me.

My reply was that I could do nothing in the matter ; I wrote to my wife, who is the essence of discretion, that, in any case, I was " particularly anxious not to have the merest appearance of trying to get behind Hanbury-Williams's back." We were old friends ; a dozen years previously Sir Arthur Davidson, Assistant Private Secretary to King Edward, had written to ask me if I could suggest anybody for the post of military attaché at Paris, and I wrote in reply that I knew only one man as admirably equipped for the appointment as myself ! His name was Hanbury-Williams, and this expressed my opinion that he was the best man to select. After my conversation with Poustovoitenko I wrote to him in the terms, which I have just mentioned, and he told me that no member of the staff except himself and Alexyeev knew anything about the project.

Alexyeev told me, on October 13th, that he intended to ask Sir William Robertson to send me back to Russia : he gave me a copy of his letter, and this is the translation :

G.H.Q., RUSSIA,  
*September 30th (October 13th), 1916.*

" YOUR EXCELLENCY,—The return of General Hanbury-Williams to General Head-quarters compels me, to my great regret, to part from General Waters, who, during his short stay here, has acquired the sympathies and respect of all. His frank character, the continuous attention which he has always given not only to questions of operations but also to those in particular concerning the supply of the Russian armies with artillery material, and the technical requirements so indispensable to them, have made me value to the highest degree his services and his co-operation. I particularly wish to emphasise his constant promptitude to forestall the solution of questions concerning our common interests, questions which require action or intervention on the part of General Head-quarters, or of the Ministry of War. His Majesty the Emperor has been pleased to note the extreme usefulness of General Waters. His departure for England would therefore cause a loss difficult to replace ; in the interests of our common cause, therefore, I consider it extremely desirable that he should return, if not to General Head-quarters, at least to the

Head-quarters of one of the Commanders of our groups of armies. I beg Your Excellency to accept the assurance of my highest consideration. (Signed) M. ALEXEYEV."

I brought this far too complimentary letter to London ; it was, of course, most gratifying, for Alexyeev was not given to lavish phrases, and the Emperor was gracious enough to tell me that I had been a "very real help." Meanwhile I had telegraphed to Robertson, by order of His Majesty, that, as soon as Hanbury-Williams should return to Mogilov, I would proceed to London. He had given me work to do there. This message produced the following reply : "You are required to stay and assist Hanbury-Williams, who will explain case on his return. The King approves and is much pleased with the way we have been kept informed during the last few weeks. I understand that the Emperor is also desirous that you should stay, and therefore assume matter will be satisfactorily arranged with Russian authorities after Hanbury-Williams arrives and explains. CHIEF."

The Emperor saw my telegram and this answer, so that I might take his instructions thereon. Discussing the matter His Majesty remarked that the reply was very odd, as he had already said he could not have two general officers at Mogilov. He added that, previously, the French had had two, which caused jealousy, and that, if he should now accept two British, "I will at once have a fuss with the French." He appreciated General Janin enormously, and wished to avoid any awkwardness in future. His Majesty then asked me whether I could throw any light on Robertson's telegram to me, and I had a brain-wave.

A brigadier-general in the British Service was a temporary rank : one was liable to be degraded at any moment, and, until a few years ago, a brigadier, on retirement from the Army, became a colonel for the rest of his life. Nowadays there are no brigadiers on the active list, but, when an officer has fulfilled the duties of one, and retires without being promoted, he is stamped with the hall-mark of brigadier-general. It reminds one rather of



Offenbach's comic opera, *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein*. In fact, after my return from China in 1910, when paying some visits abroad, a good deal of my time was taken up in explaining to foreign friends that I had not been degraded to colonel for some crime, a punishment not unknown in Russia, where, indeed, a general officer might be made to serve as a private soldier.

Only recently a foreign officer, a student of the British Army, asked me why my style is that of a brigadier-general, when there is no such rank in the Service. As he understands American I replied: "Search me!" The Navy acts differently, and so did the War Office in the eighties: a regimental lieutenant-colonel then became automatically a brevet-colonel, and, if he would retire, was made a major-general!

It seemed to me that the only explanation, which Hanbury-Williams could possibly have been instructed to give, was that I was only a sham general, masquerading under the title, and I told His Majesty so. He replied that, at Mogilov, I was considered to be the real article, and, if it should be said that this was not the case, dark suspicion would be fomented in foreign minds. My logic was afterwards proved to have been sound, for I was told as much in London. It was, however, very gratifying to learn that both sides wished me to remain in Russia.

Grave and gay are often intermingled. The Emperor's suite and the chiefs of Missions used to assemble in the ante-room before luncheon and dinner, and His Majesty—together with any other members of the Imperial Family—then came in and spoke to each of us before proceeding to the dining-room. As was customary in Russia, a variety of *hors-d'œuvre* was on a side-table, and these were attacked before sitting down. Naturally everybody waited until the Emperor and his family had selected what they wanted.

It happened, on two occasions, that, before choosing any dish, His Majesty called me to one side, and we talked about my prospects for some time. When I was dismissed, Nicholas II commenced his meal, and, on the second occasion, I found myself standing next my friend, General

Janin, who remarked with a laugh : " Really, you should choose some other time for your confidences to the Emperor ; you know we are hungry and cannot commence before he does, and I thought your gossiping would never end." As I said before, Janin was a capital fellow.

His Majesty had told me to telegraph to Sir William Robertson that he could not have two of us, besides which he wished me to represent certain matters in England, and then return to one of his armies in the field. Before despatching my message I showed it to the Emperor, who entirely approved of it. The reply to this telegram was that, under the circumstances, I was to go to England and that the question of my return " will be considered later."

There was nothing in this about which to trouble His Majesty, and Hanbury-Williams arrived on October 18th, in time for luncheon, bringing a boxful of decorations for the Russians, so I was very glad of the opportunity to press the claims of Colonel Bazarov, a most helpful officer, for the Companionship of the Bath. I also owed him a good turn personally—although it made no difference to me—for having exposed the fraud of Colonel Birdin at Irkutsk, in 1905, which brought me such a resounding official slap in the face at home.

For some inscrutable reason Hanbury-Williams's personal allowance in Russia was exactly twice as much as mine ; I never raised the question, and had, indeed, created a bad precedent so far as I personally was concerned : before leaving England for Russia I had enjoyed the hospitality of the British and French taxpayers, and therefore had informed the financial side of the War Office that I did not propose to ask for any pay for those six weeks ; on reflection it occurs to me that I ought to have—quoting Carlyle—held out, not my hand, but my hat !

Apart from the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of convincing other Missions that Britain would not be playing some dark game if I had remained Offenbached and assistant to my old friend, other difficulties might conceivably have arisen, not, of course, personal ones between ourselves, but from an entirely impersonal standpoint. The Emperor was in the habit of doing business

with Alexyeev every forenoon in detail. If I were to deal solely with the Chief of the Staff it was possible that my conclusions would not be always those at which Hanbury-Williams arrived, and the same thing might have happened in the event of my being purely an interpreter. True, this would have done away with the distaste of the Russians for the presence of a junior officer when his absence might be preferred ; as we were on such really intimate terms this point would not have arisen, but suppose that Hanbury-Williams disagreed with me on some possibly vital matter. How could I, the junior, with a fair amount of experience, put forward, to London, what seemed to me obvious ?

Alexyeev himself raised this question to me. It may be urged that we would never differ about anything really important, but we see every day two thoroughly honest men wide as the Poles apart in their treatment of the same problem. Had I been sent to Russia to serve under Hanbury-Williams I would, without a moment's hesitation, have gone graded as a subaltern for the public service ; in August 1914, knowing what was ahead of us, I asked Robertson to take me as orderly, a private soldier ; rank was no longer anything to me then, but I still think that, as matters actually were, the plan proposed—while very flattering to me—had elements of danger in such a world crisis. The question of rank, however, settled the matter : the Emperor vowed that once a general always a general—even a brigadier ! This grade being unknown in Russia I was always addressed as major-general. Indeed, when I was commanding in North China, which was not in British territory, my powers far exceeded those of a general commanding-in-chief in England or in the colonies. I could confirm sentences of death, and was charged with the administration of the civil and criminal law as regarded everybody belonging to the British troops, or attached to them ; on one occasion I declared a man bankrupt and sequestrated his funds, in the Hong-Kong and Shanghai bank at Tientsin, for his creditors !

This difference of opinion as to what constitutes a general is just one of those points wherein we are so often

misunderstood by foreigners ; in addition, the Emperor and Alexyeev wished to take advantage of Hanbury-Williams's return to charge me with important work for them in London. Russia had acted splendidly towards us : in 1914 the Emperor ordered an invasion of East Prussia by troops, which he knew had not been properly mobilised, in order to save the Western front from being literally crumpled up ; we should never forget this act of self-sacrificing heroism.

My departure had to be on the afternoon of Hanbury-Williams's return, as he required his room, and there was no other spot available. I took leave of His Majesty about luncheon-time, and, after the meal was over, was talking for a few moments to some of his suite, everybody else having left. I had just reached the foot of the stairs, leading to the front door, when the Tsarevich ran down and called out : " Papa wants to see you."

He conducted me to his father's little study, and the Emperor enquired whether Sir William Robertson had agreed that I should return to Russia. My reply was that we were to wait and see, but that I hoped for the best. Thereupon His Majesty said : " I will write to him myself." Amazement fairly took me aback at such kindness, for I knew well how overwhelmed he was with work of all sorts, and that his habit was to go out, after luncheon, every day with his son, and drive to some place in the environs where he used to dig for exercise. He had shown me previously pieces of old French accoutrements which he had thus unearthed, relics of 1812, when Davoust occupied the Governor's residence at Mogilov.

I endeavoured to express to some extent my gratitude, and His Majesty said : " I will do it now if you will help me with the spelling, in which I am a little weak." Naturally my reply was that he should not trouble himself just then when he ought to be going out, but he answered : " If I don't do it now he will never get it."

His Majesty then sat down, took a sheet of paper, asked how he should begin, and then composed the document. Standing by his side, I supervised the spelling when he was in doubt—which happened only once or twice



—and so I read the whole letter, as His Majesty desired me to do. When it was finished—and it was of considerable length—he asked me whether there was anything he could add. There was nothing ! I blush now when I think of the letter, and it need not be reproduced here ; the gist of it was that His Majesty wished me to return to one of his armies in the field, and that, if anything should occasion Hanbury-Williams to relinquish his post, the Emperor hoped that the succession would fall to me. When he had finished he said : “ I want to give you this,” handing me the insignia of the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Stanislaus.

All this took time, of course, and then copies were made, so that the Emperor’s afternoon leisure with his son was much shortened. When I was, at last, saying good-bye, His Majesty told me that the Empress, who was not feeling well, had got up and wished to see me ; all that need be said about our interview is that, although our opinions had not always been identical, she was kindness itself. The young Tsarevich, who had been present throughout, opened the door of the study for me—he had beautiful manners—and none of us ever saw each other again.

The Emperor and his son were then able to start for their afternoon excursion, and a strange thing happened. Just on the eve of my departure from Mogilov a new face, which did not attract me, caught my attention at dinner—the Empress being unwell was not present, so the chiefs of Missions had been invited. I saw it was some Minister, who had come to report to His Majesty, and, on enquiry, found it was Protopopov ; he had only recently been appointed Minister of the Interior, a post of huge power and influence.

He was the very man I wanted to meet, and better late than never. Prince Dolgoroukov, who was intimate with the Emperor, and a member of his suite, introduced us. Like some other people, however, Protopopov was such a great talker that there was no opportunity then for me to discuss anything at all. My antipathy towards him was, nevertheless, increased by his fulsome adulation of

everything English. He had visited this country not long previously as a member of the Duma Committee, and, lavish as was his flattery of my country in general, it was slight when compared with his admiration for Mr. Arthur (now Lord) Balfour. Protopopov and I were, of course, in cordial agreement regarding the charm of that statesman, whom, unfortunately, I had only met once, but, on the whole, the new Minister gave me the impression of being a shifty liar. Something or another had occurred to separate us before my turn came to speak.

After saying farewell to the Emperor and his family, I had about a couple of hours to spare before proceeding to the railway station, and happened to get hold of Protopopov. Giving him no opportunity of beginning to talk, I told him that, unless he took steps to get food to the towns in the coming winter, there would be great trouble; people would not continue to go hungry without losing patience, and there was ample food in the country. The coming tragedy never occurred to me, but rioting, even in Russia, is always dangerous; the cause should be removed, for one cannot say to what lengths disturbances, once commenced, will go, and those sad *queues* in Petrograd streets, in the height of summer, had made a very deep impression on my mind.

To my statements Protopopov replied: "But see what enormous wages the people are getting now."

"People cannot live on bank-notes, not even on Russian bank-notes," was my retort, and my readiness surprised me!

"The railways will not haul any larger quantities of food than they are now hauling," was the Minister's reply.

"That," I said, "is not true, because I spoke about this very subject to the Minister of Communications"—Trepov, a fine, able man, who later succeeded Stürmer for a short time—"in August, and he told me he would arrange for the railways to haul any food brought to them." Trepov had recognised the danger himself.

Protopopov got very red in the face: it was, no doubt, very unusual, to say the least, for a Minister to have such blunt words addressed to him. Saying he had to go off

to work we perforce parted, but I was thoroughly alarmed at our conversation. The man was evidently not only a lump of vanity, but was also a fool. The Emperor had gone out ; even had I been able to see His Majesty again the time was too short to plunge into a discussion about his Minister, whom he had so recently appointed, and it would not have been possible to have primed Hanbury-Williams hurriedly ; he might, indeed, very naturally have thought it preferable to do nothing at all, especially on my mere *ipse dixit*.

My return to Russia seemed assured, as it never entered my head—nor, I am sure, the heads of the Emperor and Alexyeev—that they, after writing, on their own initiative, and in the strongest terms, to ask for me to return, could be treated as if they were two humble suppliants begging for a favour which might be refused. Nevertheless, it will be seen that this is exactly what did happen.

In the meantime the only thing to be done about Protopopov was to wait until I should see His Majesty, when I came back, on my way to one of his armies at the front ; this interview was bound to take place. Leaving Mogilov on October 18th, in the afternoon, Petrograd was reached on the following morning. Just before my departure from General Head-quarters the Emperor was informed that King George wished to confer upon him the military Grand Cross of the Bath, the highest military distinction in the gift of our Sovereign. It was arranged that the ceremony should take place on October 19th, the day after Hanbury-Williams's return, Buchanan, as the personal representative of the King, bringing the insignia.

The Emperor had told me it would be very inconvenient for him to invite Buchanan to stay the night at Mogilov, one reason being that, if special favour were shown to one ambassador, the others would be up in arms ; another and deciding factor was that there was literally no room available for Buchanan, to say nothing of his suite of several persons. Buchanan passed me on his way to Mogilov, and arrived back in the capital the day after I did.

My departure from Petrograd was delayed for a few

days until accommodation to Bergen could be secured for me, and I saw the Buchanans several times. He told me about his visit to the Emperor, and was much dissatisfied with it. When I was at Mogilov I learned that His Majesty was aware of their views about his Consort, nor had he appreciated the ambassador's intervention on behalf of Sazonov just before that Minister was dismissed—the dismissal had been, I was told, already decided upon. Immediately after it had taken place Buchanan procured the Grand Cross of the Bath (Civil Division) for the ex-Minister; the Emperor had assented readily, but the fact remained that Alexyeev, whose position in the official world was quite on a par with Sazonov's, had only received the Grand Cross of St. Michael and St. George, a decided difference. The idea at General Head-quarters was that, if we wanted specially to honour Sazonov after his "resignation," the same honour as the one conferred upon the Chief of the Staff would have been more suitable.

Buchanan believed that he had more than one cause for complaint. On arriving at Mogilov he and his staff were received by the Emperor, and the insignia handed over, but the ambassador had no special opportunity of a heart-to-heart talk with His Majesty. Then the Empress did not appear at luncheon, her place being taken by one of her daughters, on whose right hand the ambassador was placed, so that, during the meal, His Excellency could only touch upon general topics with his host.

He had been sceptical about the Empress's ill-health on October 19th, but she had been unwell for some days, and only got up to see me for a few minutes on the 18th. Buchanan, at luncheon, was placed in accordance with the etiquette of the Russian Court; if the French Ambassador had been the guest he would have been treated similarly. The ambassador, however, believed that the whole thing was a plot on the part of Her Majesty to prevent him from having a serious conversation with the Emperor; it just happened, that was all. His Majesty could, of course, have had a long talk with Buchanan, but his time was very fully occupied, my affairs had shortened his brief leisure on the previous day, and there was really nothing in



particular to be discussed. Buchanan, however, did put one awkward question to His Majesty by enquiring whether he had any intention of making a separate peace ! This was tantamount to asking if His Majesty—whose determination to go on to the bitter end had been reported by me already—thought of going behind his pledged word to his Allies. It was unfortunate, but it appeared that the Emperor showed no resentment.

Discussing these matters with the ambassador I said it would be better not to report his beliefs, but he did not agree. In former days at Darmstadt the Empress had been a most faithful friend to the Buchanans, especially at the time of their daughter's nearly fatal illness, but, in Russia, as Empress, it would have been quite impossible for Her Majesty to have differentiated between one ambassadress and another. The Empress really could do nothing right in Buchanan's eyes, and I said so in London. It is but just to add that he acquired his information from influential people in Petrograd, whose own failings he did not recognise. They declared she was pro-German, and this view influenced him also, but, whatever her faults, our own gracious Sovereign said to me in November 1916 : " I have known her all my life, and pro-German that she is not."

Her Majesty's bad judgment of character had long been known to me ; the thread of it runs through these pages, but too little, if any, allowance has been made for the stupendous difficulties which confronted her from the very commencement of her residence in Russia. Immediately after her marriage her domestic tastes were resented ; but for her bad influence the electric light would not have failed, at Easter 1895, when all the principal people in St. Petersburg might have been blown up ; her " evil eye " was the cause of Russia's defeat in Manchuria ; she bore no son for years, and then a sickly one ; in the Great War, and before it, she was the " German woman," and so on. She was, despairing, reviled for her interest in Rasputin, but it was St. Petersburg society which launched that hypnotic being, and made a lion of him. The Empress was more sinned against than sinning, for her intentions,

at any rate, were always good, whereas those of others were sometimes quite the reverse. Autocracy was doomed in any case, and a less secluded girlhood might have made her more discriminating.

London was reached a week after leaving Petrograd, and my first act was to report myself to Sir William Robertson, to whom I handed the letters from the Emperor and Alexyeev ; it seemed more modest not to say their contents were known to me, and Robertson, after perusing them, remarked : " They are singing your praises." We discussed various points from which it was evident that he felt himself unable to go as far in the Salonika matter as Alexyeev had hoped. My next step was to report at Buckingham Palace, where the King received me immediately after an investiture he was holding. His Majesty was most kind, but the only detail about this most interesting audience, which can be given here, is the one just mentioned.

There were other visits to be paid, among them one to the Russian Embassy ; the ambassador's brother, Count Benckendorff, was one of the great officers of State in Russia, whom I had known for many years ; he came to Mogilov once during my stay there. Thence I went to Mr. Lloyd George, the Secretary of State for War ; he favoured strong action on the Macedonian front, and discussed the Russian view, also the question of Sarraill's recall until, having kept Mr. Redmond waiting with a deputation for some twenty minutes, the interview closed with his remark : " We must talk about these things again." There was no second opportunity, for, a few days afterwards, Mr. Lloyd George became Prime Minister, and was overwhelmed with other matters.

Mr. McKenna welcomed me, and I told him at once—and, of course, others—that, while the question of time was in my opinion urgent, we must not expect any active help from Russia before the end of 1917, as only with a mass of heavy guns, and skill in their use, could she hope to penetrate the German lines. Passive assistance, however, would be available in that the Germans would not get through the Russian troops. " You mean, then,

that I am to continue supplying Russia with three hundred millions a year, and France with three hundred millions, to say nothing of other people, until 1918 ? ”

“ That is exactly what I do mean,” was my reply.

“ Then it can’t be done.”

“ I did not see how it could be possible,” was my answer, “ but I thought that, perhaps, your fertile brain might devise some plan.”

“ No,” he said, “ it can’t be done.”

My thought was that, if Mr. McKenna could not find supplies, no man on earth would be able to do so. Lunching with him and his very charming wife I asked whether the Income Tax could be raised, and the Chancellor told me that, after a certain point, which had been nearly, if not quite, reached, there was no practical benefit in increasing this burden. It was extraordinarily interesting to listen to him. After luncheon his two little boys came in, and one of them asked : “ Daddy, have you taxed salt yet ? ” “ No, my boy, I have not.”

“ Well,” I said, “ you may have two financial geniuses in the form of father and son because, in the days of the old German Diet at Frankfort, money was once badly needed, so it was decided to levy a salt tax. This infuriated the people, who resolved not to eat any more salt, but, after a few days, they felt compelled to surrender ; they could not do without it ! ” So the son may yet rival his father.

Black as the situation had become the belief of the Emperor of Russia that Providence would not permit Germany to domineer over the world proved to have been well founded : my experience of the crass stupidity of German official mentality, extending over nearly half a century, was that it could not see the wood for the trees. If it had possessed a grain of common-sense the United States would not have broken off diplomatic relations in February 1917, in the very nick of time for us, whence it was but a short step to a declaration of war a couple of months afterwards. In spite of the many weaknesses of the crazy Allied military machine Providence, for once, pulled it out of the mire, using us as its instrument,

although European recognition of our exertions was not forthcoming.

Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, said he would like to see me after breakfast at his house one morning. I looked forward to our meeting with the greatest interest, nor was I disappointed. My acquaintance with him had been of the very slightest and, no doubt, he had forgotten me entirely after my introduction to him of the special Mexican Mission at the time of the Coronation festivities in 1911. Being a fisherman myself in a small way his delightful classic, *Fly Fishing*, had been devoured by me so often that I knew it by heart almost, and was sure that such an author on the delights of country life must be not only a charming gentleman, but also a statesman utterly incapable of *trade diplomacy*, or of anything approaching a mean act.

Sir Edward knew as well as I did that the reigning Empress of Russia had a stronger character than her Consort, and I was, of course, able to confirm his view—if corroboration were needed—that Her Majesty was not a good judge of character where public affairs were concerned. I felt bound, however, to say that, in Russia, for centuries a very hotbed of intrigue, often accompanied by violence, it was impossible usually for the Sovereign to decide which, if any, of several conflicting opinions was correct or even honest. The Autocrat would occasionally stumble on the right solution, but, in such an extraordinary country, a medley of many different races, confusion, falsehood and error were bound to be of frequent occurrence. All of which means that the unfortunate Empress often had things laid to her charge—sometimes by people who ought to have known better—of which Her Majesty was guiltless, apart from vile and monstrous allegations utterly devoid of even a shadow of foundation. A British Cabinet Minister said one day to a friend of mine that, after all, the Empress's moral character seemed, at last, to have been cleared, implying that he had at one time thought otherwise. My friend replied: "Do you know, sir, that you are speaking about a very great LADY?" He then turned his back on the Minister.



During my interview with Sir Edward Grey I brought up the question of Protopopov. He appreciated the danger at once if food should not be supplied. I do not know whether the Foreign Secretary feared anything worse than extensive rioting coupled with the usual methods of repression ; I did not until the sudden cessation of Press news from Petrograd in March 1917, for my information had ceased in October 1916. When the Emperor told me his reason for Sazonov's dismissal, and mentioned what would happen if a Revolution should break out, he said that the Russians were, on the whole, a "patient" people.

Rioting, however, would be quite bad enough at any time, but especially so in such a life-and-death crisis as the Great War. Sir Edward asked whether I was to return to Russia, so I told him that application to this effect had already been made, and I added that I was most anxious to tell the Emperor and Empress exactly what Protopopov had said to me. He agreed that it was not a subject which could be treated by correspondence, although His Majesty had told me to write to him direct about any matter which occurred to me.

The situation in this respect was quite different to what it had been when the Emperor told me to write to him from the theatre of war in Manchuria, a dozen years previously. It was then quite likely that my letters would have been opened before reaching him, whereas in 1916 there was the certainty that they could be delivered to him intact, being carried by one of our messengers all the way. If the Germans should waylay him in the North Sea I could have written again, knowing full well that, if no reply came to an important letter, it would be because it had not reached its destination. Apart from the practical impossibility of discussing and cross-examining the Imperial Minister by correspondence, there was also the fact that, although the matter was, in Sir Edward Grey's opinion and mine, urgent, there was still time to bring up the question personally if, as I fully expected, I would be back in Russia within a month. I would be bound then to pay my respects to the Emperor and

Empress, and I felt confident that arrangements for adequate food supplies would then be made : it was no difficult thing to do ; Protopopov would have been terrified of losing his place if he had not brought food to the railways, for Trepov, the Minister of Communications, would have reported to his master the additional quantities of foodstuffs offered for haulage to the towns, especially Petrograd and Moscow with their teeming populations.

At any rate Sir Edward Grey entirely agreed with me, that the Emperor should be informed of Protopopov's statements, and the remedy for them ; he need not have been dismissed for what could be considered a mere error of judgment, and the danger could have been averted. At the termination of my interview with the Foreign Secretary he told me he hoped my return to Russia would be expedited as much as possible. There was nothing more to be done for the moment.

After meeting General Palitsin at Newcastle and escorting him to London—he was to supersede General Jilinsky at the French General Head-quarters—besides carrying out the Emperor's instructions, I returned to my home in the country, and occupied myself largely with looking after those irritating animals, hens ; they were a veritable hair-shirt, and afforded me plenty of practice in patience. No news of any sort, of course, came my way beyond what was in the Press, and it frequently required corroboration, as different newspapers often treated the same items differently.

A few days after my interview with Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Asquith's Government fell, and neither he nor Mr. McKenna joined that of Mr. Lloyd George. Nothing further happened until, at the commencement of 1917, I received a telegram from General Gourko, acting Chief of the Staff during Alexyeev's absence on sick leave ; it expressed his hope for my return to Russia. Some reply had to be sent, so I asked Robertson about it. He said there was no particular need for another officer to go, but he would raise no objection if the Russians should ask for me officially. As both the Emperor and Alexyeev personally had been treated in an unheard-of manner, when they had

applied for me very officially indeed, there was no object in my saying anything about a telegram, which His Majesty sent me from Tsarskoe Selo just after Gourko's message ; in fact, this second telegram has never been mentioned by me until now except to my wife. I am positive—indeed, I know—that it was not Robertson who was the author of this treatment of the Emperor and his Chief of Staff.

My fears induced me at last to write to the Emperor, for time was getting on, and my anxiety about Protopopov's policy had in no way diminished. I told His Majesty that I wanted to see him on some matters of interest, mentioning also that, if he would have another official request put forward for my return, it would be sanctioned. Knowing him as I did he would understand that matters of interest did not mean tittle-tattle, but something serious.

The next thing was to get my letter delivered. The ordinary post was, of course, out of the question, but there remained the Foreign Office bags, so I wrote and asked Sir Eric Drummond whether he would have my letter forwarded through the British Embassy at Petrograd. Protopopov's name was not mentioned in it and, if Sir Edward Grey had remained in office, I would have submitted the letter to him. As it was, it was certain to be opened by some British official somewhere. Possibly a sinister interpretation may have been placed upon the vague expression about interesting subjects, and, of course, there was the definite request for an official application.

If my letter had been allowed to reach the Emperor it would certainly have been answered, but he never received my communication. From casual enquiries afterwards, it appeared that none of our official bags, from the Foreign Office or from the War Office, failed to reach Petrograd during the period in question, so that the curious have cause for cogitation. Other letters had been written by me to more than one Sovereign before and after 1914—some were sent through the ordinary post—and every one had been acknowledged in due course. Did this particular one ever leave London ? If it did, what happened to it ? The enigma may possibly be solved in somebody's Memoirs fifty years hence.

Apart from all this, however, it is amazing that the moderate Russian revolutionaries and the Allies could have, for a moment, believed in Russia prosecuting the struggle after the overthrow of the Empire. The precedent, and a recent one, was all the other way: in 1905, within a twelvemonth of the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, the Grand Duke Serge had been murdered, and rioting had been common because the people were sick of the campaign. By the end of 1916 they had, after more than two disastrous years, infinitely greater cause for being sick to death of fighting.

Happening to be in London in February 1917, I told Robertson, with reference to his former remark that the Russians should first ask for me, that I had seen the contents of the Emperor's and Alexyeev's letters, which I had handed to him, and that, although they were personal ones, their requests seemed to be sufficiently official. There were, of course, wheels within wheels, for somebody else, who knew all that was going on, remarked to me, about the same time, that the Emperor must be "a liar," since he had originally asked for Hanbury-Williams to return.

It is, of course, intelligible that, having to choose between two men, both of whom he liked, he might have preferred the one who knew his language without being charged with falsehood, but the unkind accusation has been shown to be devoid of any foundation. His Majesty never suggested that I should replace Hanbury-Williams, save only in case of his transfer elsewhere; failing this he requested that I should join one of his armies in the field. As the slur on His Majesty's truthfulness reached other ears than mine, it is my duty to make the matter perfectly clear.

As regards my part in the whole business it boils itself down to this: I learned that Lord Hardinge, then Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, objected successfully to my return to Russia; Buchanan had also opposed it, and, with that great influence behind him, came in an easy winner. If, however, that brave and most faithful ally, Nicholas II, could have been warned in time of the—to say the least—terrible error of judgment on the



part of Protopopov, it is possible that the awful tragedy might have been averted during the war, thereby hastening its termination, while the Imperial Family might have been saved if the Revolution had occurred after the conclusion of peace, when the Russian masses might have been, at first, less bloodthirsty. Failing such a warning, backed by facts, my fears, as expressed to Sir Edward Grey, and appreciated by him in November 1916, were likely to be but too well founded. The reality far surpassed them.

Protopopov, in October 1916, had agreed that there was abundant food in Russia ; when his argument that people could live on bank-notes was demolished, he lied about Trepov ; on exposing his falsehood, the Minister of the Interior said he had no more time to give me.

His starvation system was, as everybody is aware, the spark which exploded the magazine in March 1917. Living in comfort himself he could not understand the effects of hunger on even the most patient of peoples. His crime brought down the whole of Russia with a crash so truly appalling that its consequences to humanity cannot yet be foretold.

## CHAPTER XXII

THE sudden cessation of Press telegrams from Russia, in March 1917, seemed to me more ominous than anything I had ever known about that great country. When the fact of the Revolution was made public I wrote to Sir Eric Drummond, as mentioned in Chapter XX, what it meant to the Allied cause.

The first Provisional Government included such well-known men as Prince Lvov, Milyoukov and Kerensky, but Sazonov was not in it. He was, however, the leading actor, although suffering from illness when the outbreak occurred. Being named ambassador to London he was just about to start for his post when his moderate supporters were brushed aside exactly as the Emperor had foretold a few months earlier.

Sazonov had been Foreign Minister for some years, until dismissed, for reasons already stated, in the summer of 1916; he necessarily wielded enormous influence whether in office or out, and he had hypnotised Buchanan throughout. He did not, of course, wish the Revolution to occur in the way or for the real reason—hunger—that it did. He had foreseen a peaceable change of system, a constitutional monarchy like ours to be suddenly grafted on to Russia! Truly, it is amazing. Sazonov had laid the train and Protopopov unwittingly fired it.

Towards the end of March 1917, I was asked by an Intelligence officer at the War Office my view about the Imperial Family; it was that the Moderates were already tottering to their fall, and that, by the aid of some gold, drink and drugs, the members of it could be helped to escape to England, but, I added, unless this were done immediately their lives were surely forfeit.

Nothing is more extraordinary than the absolute failure

of the Moderate Revolutionaries to read or even to see the writing on the wall. They must have known, at least as well as I did, that, from October 1916 until certainly the end of 1917, Russia could do no more than hold her own ; I had explained this to Mr. McKenna and to others, it was so obvious. When the tragedy occurred it was the last straw which pushed Russia down and out at once.

Yet what happened ? The first Provisional Government looked forward to still greater efforts and heavier sacrifices on the part of that same proletariat, which had risen in fury. The Moderates, as personified by Sazonov, had hoped to lead ; to place ostensibly power in the hands of this proletariat, while really retaining it themselves in order to prosecute the death struggle to a triumphant conclusion. They were the froth to be whisked away immediately.

Hunger had been the spark which was bound to let loose a passionate desire for peace. Millions and millions of Russians had been killed or maimed, some of them drawn from the most remote parts of Siberia, and the great mass of the surviving population was sick to death of the war. Power was in their hands, and they meant to use it. In 1904, in Manchuria, my servant was a fine, intelligent Siberian from the ranks. On the eve of our advance southward from Mukden, which was intended to recapture Liaoyan, and culminated disastrously in the long series of battles on the Sha-ho, I told him to get ready to march, and he replied : " I suppose it is another retreat ? " That the movement would end in one seemed to me to be highly probable, but I asked Stepanov why he took such a gloomy view. He replied that the whole campaign had consisted of nothing but losses and retreats, and he expected no change on this occasion. He would do as he was told as long as he was obliged to obey orders, but high politics were nothing to him and his like. The European Russian, less intelligent than the Siberian, was still less likely to be enamoured of fighting after his calamitous experiences in the Great War.

As soon as the Revolution broke out, in a relatively quiet manner, the Allies put their heads together, and

insisted on unparalleled vigour in prosecuting the struggle. The true inwardness of the situation escaped them, and so they fondly imagined that the great mass of Russians would continue voluntarily and indefinitely to do what they had been compelled to do previously.

From the very beginning diplomacy helped to muddle the whole business. At the moment of the explosion Lenin and some of his friends were refugees in Switzerland. Their day had come at last, and autocracy had vanished for ever. Lenin asked us for passports to proceed to Russia, the route through England being apparently the only one available. The British Diplomatic Authorities sympathised with the request; it would be splendid to get such a man back to his own country where he would, of course, throw all his vast influence towards vanquishing the common enemy.

Lenin, however, explained that his adherents believed war to be entirely wrong, except in an event not covered by existing circumstances. His request for passports was thereupon refused; it would be much better to force him to remain in Switzerland. But Lenin was more resourceful than our authorities had imagined possible, and he renewed his application at the German Legation. Berlin did not wish any revolutionary propaganda to be let loose among its nationals on the journey, but it appreciated the enormous boon to the cause of the Central Powers if the Russian Army should be disintegrated. So Lenin's party passed through Germany behind locked doors, but the Germans soon discovered that the Russians were fully occupied with their own plans to stop the war. Other revolutionaries were therefore allowed to travel just like anybody else.

Nor was our handling of Trotsky likely to enlist his sympathies on our behalf. He was treated, on the other side of the Atlantic, like an undesirable immigrant at Ellis Island, a procedure which speaks for itself and needs no comment. Indeed, if our authorities had wished to make bitter enemies of Lenin, his remarkable lieutenant, and their adherents, they could scarcely have improved upon their action.

The first Provisional Government having been swept



aside in the "two weeks" predicted by the Emperor, Kerensky appeared on the scene as nominal dictator; that braggart's day soon passed, however, to be succeeded by the Bolsheviki, who are firmly in power to-day, eight years afterwards.

The advent of Bolshevism was, from the beginning, a certainty to anybody really acquainted with the Russian people, but soldiers and diplomatists alike continued to believe that this was only a passing phase. Give it one more push and it will topple over, was the cry. Two of many schemes, put before our authorities, by Russians, may be mentioned: one was that a small British force, landed in Russia, would be sufficient to rally the mass of her ignorant and widely scattered races to its side. Another plan was that, if we would declare Russia to be a dependency of the British Crown, and nominate a Royal Viceroy, the vast mass of the inhabitants would hail us as their saviours. The initial number of men required for this purpose was said to be one million, to be maintained at that strength!

When the Russians decided to enter into peace negotiations with the Germans, the official world believed that the terms would be so onerous that Russia would have no choice but to continue fighting. They were indeed rigorous, but, as I had already written to a Cabinet Minister, the Russians meant to have peace at all costs, whatever the conditions might be. Even harder ones than those of Brest-Litovsk would have been accepted.

A Revolution in Russia would, under any circumstances, have been different from one in any other civilised European state; it has been mentioned already that the upbringing of the Grand Dukes and other magnates had been such that, outside their own personal following, they literally could have no friends in case of trouble. They had been brought up to think only of themselves, and some Russian post-war Memoirs show that the aristocracy does not yet realise its contribution—with ever-increasing momentum—to March 1917, and the subsequent horrors.

Princess Palei has recorded something which throws light on the subject. In the nineties she was the young,

lovely and clever wife of Captain Pistolkhors, the aide-de-camp of the Grand Duke Paul, uncle of Nicholas II. The couple were divorced, and she married the Grand Dukemorganatically ; he was foully murdered with most of the other members of the Imperial Family. She laments the loss of so many of her beautiful treasures, and the pillage of the Palace she had been at such pains to embellish. She does not, however, seem to have sympathy for the scores of millions of her compatriots whose sufferings had been lifelong, at the best but one step removed from absolute famine. A leading figure in St. Petersburg society from girlhood, and kind-hearted, the masses simply did not, and do not now, exist for her.

Nor did Lenin, the cultured fanatic, at first understand them : factory workers in Russia come from the peasantry, and they used to return to the land in large numbers for harvest, when labour was scarce. Demanding fantastic wages in the towns he thought the peasants would work hard to supply food in return for a worthless currency, forgetting, or unaware, that there is nobody on earth more indolent by nature than the Russian ; continuous hard work is for him a very cruel punishment indeed. Experience soon taught Lenin, by the killing of his labour-compelling expeditions, to leave the peasantry, the cornerstone of his system, severely alone.

What chance is there of a return to a monarchy, however limited ? My information from Russia, through my own Intelligence Department, has been that the peasants, having seized the land, believe a Restoration would not only deprive them immediately of this land, but that they themselves would be decimated—at the very least—as a punishment for their crimes. They do not trust their own class ; is it credible that they should place the slightest faith in the promise of an amnesty circulated by such a Pretender as the Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovich, who, living in safety and comfort abroad, sends his unfortunate emissaries to be immolated at home ? A Restoration in such a huge country as Russia is the dream of visionaries.

The value of Sazonov's judgment is shown by the fact that the moderate revolutionaries were out of power in a

fortnight, although, at the time of the outbreak, all the machinery of government was in their hands. Neither they nor anybody else could have controlled the forces which they had combined to let loose. How, then, was it to be expected that mediocre and savage leaders like the brave Kolchak, Denikin, Wrangel and others could succeed? Our authorities, misled by their advisers, were induced to take them at their own valuation, and this resulted necessarily in making the vast mass of Russia solid against us, while a refugee was angry because we did not annex his country!

The great people had not set an example, when things were going very badly indeed, during the Russo-Japanese War: not a single one of the numerous Grand Dukes—except Boris Vladimirovich, for a brief space, and he was worse than useless—would go to Manchuria. A member of the British Embassy told me that the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevich, on being asked whether he intended to take the field, replied: “Me! never!” (“*Moi! Jamais de la vie.*”) He was not, perhaps, much to blame, for he had not been brought up to recognise his responsibilities.

The mistaken judgment of the unfortunate, and equally unhappy, Empress in selecting Protopopov undoubtedly precipitated the catastrophe, which was, in any case, only a question of time, no matter who was the nominal Autocrat. Always out of her element in Russia, she was ever seeking for the truth and was bound to fail. She received scant help, and was always groping in the dark. Depressed in spirits, almost everybody of influence was against Her Majesty from the date of her marriage, and St. Petersburg society, as well as some diplomatists, who were primed by it, were at least as much to blame for the tragedy. Its members had been brought up to think of the people as beasts of burden, whereas anything could have been done with those patient beings if those in high places had been taught their duty.

Not long after March 1917, a cultured English lady told me how woefully I had been deceived in the Empress because, she said, one of her Maids of Honour had written a volume exposing her former mistress in her true character.

Being interested, the book was shown to me. I had known every one of these very few ladies since the wedding ceremony of 1894; not only was the authoress not one of them, but she bore a name of which I had never heard! Yet my English friend was cross when I laughed at her.

So long as the Great War was postponed affairs would, in all probability, have moved more slowly in Russia, but this catastrophe hastened matters. During the great famine of the early nineties a multitude of reservists were recalled to the colours in order that, by feeding them, the number of agitators might be largely reduced, for the soldiery come from the people. A new epoch had to be born. Blood alone could bring it into being, for the only possible result of the colossal armaments was a terrifying smash. The unproductive burdens on taxpayers everywhere were such that, as I had reported from Berlin in 1902, nations would soon have to fight or burst, and each Government would sooner risk the former alternative.

Armaments were the prime cause of the death struggle, and the proximate causes were twofold. After the Treaty of Frankfort, in May 1871, the one great objective of practically every French politician was revenge for defeat. Before 1870 a former Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Stubbs, when Regius Professor of Modern History at his University, described the French character as "gay, unscrupulous, ambitious, ruthless, false, and above all things believing in and devoted to the acquisition of glory in war." That fascinating writer, Monsieur Thiers—in his monumental work on *The Consulate and the Empire*—states that it was the boundless ambition of the great Napoleon which wrested from France her rightful position as "the paramount Power in Europe."

Every penny that could be squeezed out of the French taxpayer for the *revanche* was extracted from him—not that the money was by any means always devoted to its avowed purpose. The Germans, a less military nation by temperament, were, naturally, not behindhand in their efforts to protect themselves, and so it went on. Then came the Franco-Russian Alliance, followed by the *Entente* between this country and France which, of course, hastened the day



of battle. The cost was becoming unbearable. Germany was, of course, the technical aggressor, and chose what seemed to be the most favourable opportunity, threatened as we were with civil war.

It is often declared that, had we held aloof in 1914—it is not suggested that we should have done so—Germany would soon have crushed us. Could she? In August 1914, our commitments on land and sea were large indeed, but they were the veriest trifles as compared with those, which we shouldered immediately afterwards, and carried unflinchingly for four long years. With the best will in the world our Allies failed us, so that, instead of one Great War, we waged actually half a dozen gigantic wars. If we could do that, and succeed, surely our task would have been far easier had we been fighting any Power on earth single-handed?

These pages deal with the past. Continental Europe is still an armed camp. So long as that camp comprises mainly the old-fashioned armies of horse, foot and artillery, her nations can handle nothing but colonial warfare. The reason is that hard cash, in vast quantities, is indispensable nowadays for a great struggle. To supersede these armies by aircraft, the chemist, and the engineer would be a far more costly undertaking. Not one of the continental nations has got the money, nor can it procure it for the purpose.

THE END

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